

Ashes

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Summary: The world can only end in ice or ashes. AU. No slash. OOC.  
Based off 'Let it Go' and 'Let Em Burn' mashup.

## 1. Chapter 1

**\*\*A/N: Enjoy :D\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup couldn't remember a time that he had been truly happy, except maybe in his dreams. He couldn't remember a time when he wasn't weighed down by chains, or hadn't known the white haired boy in the cell with him. They had been together since childhood, bound to each other by the need for companionship and survival.<p>

He remembered one brief moment of fun, years and years ago, when they had both used their powers on the walls " but that had been a very long time ago and they both had been whipped with what felt like a hundred lashes for doing it.

Hiccup remembered seeing the angry red welts all over his friend's back, feeling them split open on his own. Although Jack had risked another, even more brutal whipping, if he were caught, he had created a small patch of ice on the walls that Hiccup could rest against, numbing the pain in his back.

He remembered that night well: him sitting, half-naked in the cell across from Jack, the ice soothing his burning back. It was the only time he had ever been able to feel a burning sensation, and it was odd and painful and scary.

"They didn't hurt me too badly." he'd insisted to Jack, his hands in shackles, his back hurting so badly he almost cried. But he had not lost his courage.

Jack nodded listlessly, his eyes carrying only worry for his friend. Never mind that Hiccup could do nothing to help him; the only thing the white haired boy cared about was if Hiccup was alright.

They had retired to their respective sides of the cell that night, and both pretended to sleep, and both heard the other sobbing until late into the night.

Hiccup remembered the time when they thought they could "purify" Jack and he by switching their elements; he spent the night in a snowdrift, and they turned the heat up in Jack's cell until it was almost unbearable.

He still remembered Jack nearly crying with relief when they finally put the fire out, letting the temperature gradually drop. He had been doing much the same when they'd allowed him out of the snowdrift again. White with cold and shivering horribly, he had collapsed to his knees in the mercifully warm cell. He remembered Jack had rushed over to him and swept him up into a hug and cried into his shoulder. And the sight of his friend's tears proved to be too much for him, and soon he was sobbing, too.

He remembered they once thought if they just beat them enough, their powers would gradually go away. The time they thought that starving them would make them learn to "behave" and "control them".

The only way the two had gotten through a lot of that was whens. They played a lot of 'when' games.

"When we get out of here," Hiccup would begin, and Jack would finish it. Sometimes Hiccup would finish his own thought, but they always pledged to do just that when "not if, but when" they were free. You couldn't hope to survive as a pessimist. The sheer weight of getting through the day was quite enough for Hiccup.

And he remembered the day he had gotten the worst beating of his life. It had been through what Hiccup called the Hollow Period, one of those long, dreary, silent days where Jack did nothing but stare off into the distance, his blue eyes vacant. He had seemed so lifeless that Hiccup had come to know that Jack as Hollow Jack, not the one he knew and loved.

Hiccup still didn't know the man's name. All he knew was that Jack hadn't been answering fast enough for him, that the man had grabbed Jack by the throat. That Hiccup saw red. He had bounded forward in a blinding rage, and kicked the man in the shin, forcing him to drop his friend. The man had yowled in pain, scowling at the copper haired boy. The whipping lasted much longer than the regular forty lashes that time, and the man had beaten him until he'd been sobbing and pleading.

But when he got back to the cell, Hollow Jack was gone. In his place was the concerned boy Hiccup saw after every beating, quietly, secretively trying to numb the worst of it with his ice, despite how much Hiccup had worried that they were going to get caught.

That was the day he'd first felt the flames. Jack was as cool and detached as the ice he could make; Hiccup's fire was a reflection of him, roaring and raging and furious at the world. It was natural for Hiccup to feel anger towards their captors, but the rage he felt then

was indescribable. He'd turned to Jack, surprising the younger boy with the blazing determination and anger in his green eyes. "When we get out of this, we are going to burn this island down to the \_ground\_."

Jack had nodded fervently in agreement, and they had pledged that it would be so. If they weren't driven out by a mysterious case of frostbite first, he'd joked, and Hiccup had offered him a weak smile. And Jack had gently put him to bed that night, like he was a small child. The boy's icy fingers played with his hair, but Hiccup let him, because he hadn't been touched for so long in this way, a way that was warm and comforting. So he lay there quietly, letting Jack soothe and stroke him, and, although Hiccup's body was tired from all the injuries, the horrible images swirling in front of his eyes prevented sleep.

He lay awake that night, listening to Jack's deep breathing as the white haired boy continued to gently stroke his hair. He'd never even bothered to lie down, Jack hadn't; he knew he'd be getting no sleep, either. He'd stayed fully awake that night, and Hiccup had lain awake with him.

These memories were not the ones the boy visited most, but they all stuck out to him greatly, and for good reason. Funny that they should all be cropping up tonight of all nightsâ€¦

He could hear the telltale sound of Jack's ice creaking on his shackles, the metal clinking and groaning in an almost alarming way. Hiccup knew his friend's hands were shaking.

His own fingers were twitching just slightly inside his own cuffs, but he dared not show his fear. His friend was afraid enough, and he didn't want to add to the negative mix.

He could hear the hinges squeaking as they broke completely away from the floor and he saw Jack's eyes go wide, both impressed and slightly scared of his own ability.

"C'mon," Hiccup urged in a voice barely above a whisper, easily melting the metal of his own cuffs and slipping after Jack, towards the window. The metal bars on it proved to melt just as easily, and the two slipped out, unseen, their boots hitting dry sand. Hiccup could again feel that familiar anger building, the rage searing his face, turning his cheeks hot, as he looked up at the building he had been confined to for fourteen years.

"So, this is the ocean," Jack whispered wonderingly, leaning down and sticking a hand in the water. When he pulled it back out, a small part of the water had frozen. "Let's get out of here, Hiccup."

Hiccup half-wanted to stick around. He wanted to wait until the sunrise, when the people would wake up and find them gone. And then panic would set in, and, as they searched all around for the two elements and found them nowhere, the panic would just grow bigger. And how amazing would it be if they happened to be there, just waiting to rain down their wrath upon the people for the hell they had put them through for so long?

"Hiccup?"

The boy was jerked out of his thoughts by a hand on his shoulder. The blue eyes looking back at him were concerned. "Are you alright?"

"Yes." His voice was brittle, nearly breaking, but he turned to Jack and tried to give him a smile that wasn't completely false. "Yes, I'm alright."

Jack nodded uncertainly. "Right."

The two looked at each other for another long second, and then raced to the edge of the ocean, Jack taking a split second hesitation as he paused to see if his ice would carry him. When it flawlessly did, he began to run, to streak across the water. Hiccup twirled his hands quietly, letting a burst of flame come out, standing on it, letting it carry him across. He hit the opposite shore and turned to Jack, watching the flames flicker and die on the water now that there was no one there to feed them.

And together the frost boy and the fire boy streaked away, to start a new life.

The cold September air swirled around Hiccup, and he shivered slightly. Living with the controller of ice meant some pretty cold nights, the ones where Jack was more afraid than others, but that didn't make him used to the winter. Not at all.

There was a bit of a hush as both of them looked at each other for a moment, their heavy footsteps ceasing suddenly.

"Isn't thisâ€¦isn't this amazing?" Jack whispered, his eyes sparkling with the thought of what was to come. "I meanâ€¦we don't have to hide it or get punished for doing it anymore! We can justâ€¦" as if to emphasize his point, he let a snowflake form in his palm, flickering bright blue. "â€¦Let it go!"

Hiccup nodded at his friend's power, opening his hand, examining his own, bright red palms. He supposed that, if Jack was free, then he was free, too, but he didn't feel free. He still felt bound, tied to that island in every way. As if he couldn't let it go.

Even though Jack formed more flakes in his palms, let ice begin to cover the trees and ground, even though he streaked a couple feet away from Hiccup and began letting it go, Hiccup didn't feel as though it was going to be that easy for him.

He watched Jack racing around, laughing, letting the wind carry him up higher to paint the leaves of autumn with a covering of frost. Again, that indescribable anger began to stir. If those people, if that island, if they hadn't locked him up in the first place, it wouldn't feel like such a big deal to Jack, that he was finally able to let it go. Being free would be second nature, not something he had to stop and appreciate.

And the boiling anger only grew. It lasted for quite awhile, or at least it felt that way to him. In truth, he made it only a few hours before he felt he had to say something.

"We don't have to let it go."

"What?" Jack's innocent blue eyes were pure and confused when he glanced up at his friend.

"We don't have to just let it go," the boy repeated quietly, and Jack's look took on an even greater confusion.

"What do you mean? We just hide it again?" His breathing hitched slightly in fear of that hell.

"No!" Hiccup scowled, as if he thought the boy stupid. He ducked to pass under a low-hanging tree branch. "I mean, we don't need to just walk away from what happened to us. Those people hurt us, treated us like savages! Like we didn't even deserve to walk the earth with them! Don't you want to make them pay?"

Uncertainly, Jack shook his head, taking a step back, away from his friend. "Iâ€¦I don't understand what you mean. We were lucky to escape with our lives, Iâ€¦Iâ€¦"

"Don't you get it?" Hiccup's voice began to rise. "We shouldn't have had to! Why should we have had to fear for our lives? Living in fear, day after day? That's NOT how they treat people, or how people should be treated! But nowâ€¦" his voice grew ragged, and his breathing began to slow.

"Now we could give them a taste of what it's like. Make them live in fear for once."

Jack only stared at Hiccup in pure confusion. "I don't even know you anymore."

"Think about it!" Hiccup urged. "We could make everybody, everybody pay for what they've done!" In his anger, he formed a small, fiery Earth, clenching his hands around it, reducing it entirely to cinders. "We could show them what fear and pain really are. They would never hurt us again. We'd burn them all to the ground. Freeze them half to death. People would be starving and bleeding in the streets! Half of the island in eternal summer, the other for winter!" He threw his arms out to indicate what he meant, shooting fire out of his hands.

A small tree creaked, groaned, and finally collapsed from the fiery blast.

"We could crush them all! Burn everyone! Make them pay!"

"And how long would it take," Jack finally found his voice and used it, taking a step towards Hiccup. "How long would it take, then, for them to send out people to just lock us up all over again?"

"We're stronger this time," Hiccup insisted. "We're faster, and smarter and more powerful than they are. We're fire and ice, Jack. Together, you and I are unstoppable."

## 2. Chapter 2

**\*\*A/N:** Alright, witches. Here's the deal. I'm getting a lot of ideas for this fic beyond this chapter, so this might be more than a

three-shot. Okay? C: \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"What?"<p>

The look on Jack's face spoke of disgust, horror, fear and anger, but he didn't look at all pleased with the proposition. When he still didn't reply, Hiccup tried again.

"Jack, what's wrong?"

"Let meâ€|" Jack took a deep, shuddering breath. "Let me get this straight: you want to killâ€|to kill people? To kill everyone?"

"Ofâ€|of course I do," Hiccup stammered, suddenly very unsure of himself. Why was Jack looking at him like he was crazy? The fire sparking in his palms died suddenly, and he didn't bother to try and restart it. "I meanâ€|not everyoneâ€|I mean, our pledge. Remember it?"

"Hiccup, we pledged a lot of things," Jack replied. "Care to be a little bit more specific?"

"We promised we'd burn that island. You promised to help me kill everyone there."

"For God's sake, Hiccup! That was a long time ago!"

"But you still promised!" Hiccup insisted. "What, are you just going to break it now?"

"There are people on that island!" Jack began. "Families who didn't even know we were there, children who weren't even born when we were taken, I meanâ€|there are fathers and mothers and siblings! It'd be wrong to break apart a family! We'd be doing the same thing they did to us!"

"Exactly!" Hiccup countered. "Why do you think I want to do it? When I do decide to kill them, Jack, I'll be showing them mercy. Because the ones I let liveâ€|those are the ones I'm going to make pay for what they put us through."

"Hiccupâ€|"

"Think about it, Jack! We could finally make them see how it felt to be us! We could make them regret it a thousand times over! And by the time we're finished with them, we'll be unstoppable. They'll be begging us for death."

When Jack didn't reply, Hiccup barreled on, the sparks beginning to shoot out of his hands again in his agitation. "You could cover it in winter. The harshest winter they have ever seen! An eternal snowstorm, raining vengeance down on them at last! Their pathetic cries ringing in our ears! We would never have to show them mercy or hide from them again!"

"Youâ€|" Jack managed to spit out.

Hiccup could feel a smile beginning to spread on his face. Jack had never disagreed with him before, and the fire boy felt sure that his talk of eternal winter had won Jack over.

But the white haired boy only managed, "You are crazy."

The smile dropped suddenly from Hiccup's face. "No, I'm not! I'm trying to show the world that they can't hurt us!"

"If you go about this the way you want, millions of people are going to try to recapture or even kill you! People will see your power and want it for themselves! Especially if you go around flashing it like that."

"Let them try," Hiccup shrugged nonchalantly. "They can't beat us."

"I'm not going to do it."

Hiccup's brows drew down angrily. "Butâ€"

"I've spent years and years hearing that I'm a monster! I'm not going to succumb to that and prove them right!"

"This isn't about whether or not you are what they've painted you to be!" The grass around Hiccup grew black and scorched.

"Please, listen to me!" A note of desperation began to color Jack's voice now, and Hiccup's rage began to calm, just a bit. He recognized that fearful tone, the tone that meant Jack really was scared, that he really was worrying for his friend's safety, and, in this case, his sanity. "You don't understand, this is a bad idea! Let's just go away together, Hiccup, please. We can run and never look back."

"Why should we have to run?"

"If we're away from people, we can't hurt them. And they can't hurt us."

"It doesn't seem fair." Hiccup muttered. "That we always have to flee. That we're not allowed to stand and fight."

"Another day." Jack said. "Once they've seen that we're not monsters, they won't be afraid of us anymore."

Jack's words and opinions had always mattered to Hiccup. He had started to listen to that desperation, and started to let the words themselves sway him, but the words suddenly brought the pounding rage roaring back to life. The only difference was that it was no longer aimed at Jack as well as the island.

Why should we have to prove that we aren't monsters? Hiccup demanded angrily of himself. He turned to Jack with a determined look on his face.

"You can do that." He whispered. "I'm done trying to sway you. You've chosen a different path. But I'm going back there, and I'm going to burn every last man, woman and child on that island. I am going to reduce their homes to cinders. And I am going to enjoy every second of it. Goodbye."

"Wait!" Jack took a couple clumsy steps forward, trying to keep pace. Hiccup turned to him, wondering if giving up had made the boy change his mind.

"Wait." Jack panted. "I'm not going to help you. But I'm going with you, to protect you. Just in case you need it, alright?"

"I won't be needing you." Hiccup said sharply. "You don't have to come with me."

Jack didn't flinch at the harshness of his friend's tone; the same stubborn look in Hiccup's eyes blazed in Jack's as well. "Maybe you won't need me, I don't care. But just in case you do, I'm going to be right there, alright? I don't want anybody to hurt you again, and if that means charging off with you on some crazy mission to start a bonfire until all your inner angst can be resolved, that's what I'm going to do."

Hiccup closed his eyes, a small smile tugging at his lips. "Thank you."

"C'mon." Jack whispered. "Let's get this over with."

### 3. Chapter 3

**\*\*A/N:** Ehhh, this chapter is just okay, I think. And watch me write like crazy on this one while I pointedly blow off Untold, Starlight Star Bright, Overachiever, Shattered, It's a Scary World out There, etc. etc. xD I just really need to settle down and write on something else XD\*\*

**\*\*Anyway,** I love you all for your reviews C: please keep leaving them? C: \*\*

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><p>The sky was turning red in preparation for dawn, and, as Sven sat reluctantly up in his bed, he thought he smelled smoke. Fires were common things in the Viking lands; dragons still attacked these islands often, and sometimes a raid would occur in the night.<p>

Sven was a light sleeper; it surprised him that he would have been able to sleep through the noise of a dragon raid. Swinging his legs over the side of the bed and jerking his helmet up from the floor, he wandered, a bit sleepily, over to the window to take a look.

His drooping eyelids popped open and he let out a strangled cry.

The inferno was something of the likes of which he had never seen. The flames kept sparking, rising higher, devouring trees and homes and forests, and there seemed to be many people about, rushing around, trying to fix it. A few held buckets that were filled to the brim with water, judging by the clear liquid that splashed out onto the ground.

He picked up his axe, turning to race out the door to help fight it.



\* \* \*

><p>When they reached their island, Hiccup was surprised. Jack was shaking slightly, his fingers trembling as he looked out over the water. Hiccup hesitated for only a moment himself. He couldn't deny that he was also, just a little bit, afraid. The thought of coming back to the place where he had been imprisoned for so long was more than a little terrifying. Still. He was strong now. Strong and powerful. And they couldn't hurt him.<p>

"We'll be alright," he whispered, to give both himself and Jack strength and courage. "They can't hurt us."

Jack nodded, his lips pressed so tightly together that they were nearly white. He didn't offer a verbal response.

Hiccup flexed his fingers slightly, calling the power forth. The flames came rushing out of his fingertips, setting a small section of the ground alight. As the fire crackled and popped merrily, Hiccup stepped closer, splitting it easily until it formed two, separate fires. Sending one in one direction and the other in another proved to be easy; he'd never even known he could do that until now.

A proud smile tugged at the corners of his lips as the fire reached new heights, licking and eating everything in sight. The flames devoured trees and land, and Hiccup stretched it out towards the nearest home. The fire happily began to eat away at the wood. He could hear the screams of terror beginning shortly after. As the people began to run out, Hiccup drew some of the fire closer around him, shielding himself from view. He could hear water sloshing in buckets, trying to douse the fire.

He did feel it start to flicker in some places, threatening to die, but he was reasonably confident that by now, the inferno was too strong. Nobody could kill it now. The miserable humans were powerless against him. The wind blew his flames higher, lifted his hair back off his forehead. He grinned into the breeze as more screams reached his ears. This was \_wonderful\_.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack was not exactly sharing his friend's feelings. In fact, if Hiccup had thought to look back, he would have seen the frost boy's face twisted in disgust and horror as every scream pierced the air. Jack stared at his friend, at the flames rising higher and higher with every gust of wind, every flick of Hiccup's fingers. His stomach began to churn as the smell of smoke hit his nostrils.<p>

The fire walled them in, and sweat began to trickle down Jack's face and neck. He looked up at Hiccup tentatively for a second, wondering if he should ask the boy to calm down. He knew from experience that Hiccup had a fiery temper that lived up to his power. But surely, he couldn't be this angry, could he? He couldn't want to kill innocent peopleâ€|

Any minute now, Jack knew, the boy would open his eyes and see that this wasn't what he really wantedâ€|he would turn away from this, and leave the island once more. Sure, it might be badly burned, but Hiccup had stopped before he could finish, and that was what would

matter.

The problem was, his friend \_wasn't stopping\_.

The fire roared loudly in Jack's ears, and, as the smoke hit him again, he realized there was no oxygen left to breathe. He hit the ground on his knees, trying desperately to suck in air, but there was none to be found. And all around him, the wall of fire only grew stronger, the smoke only growing thicker. Hiccup wasn't going to stop.

His eyes began to water from the smoke, and he opened his mouth, sure vomit would come tumbling out, but he merely retched onto the ground. There was still a gap in the fire wall, and he knew it would be closed soon. So he needed to reach it, because he knew now that he couldn't stay close to Hiccup. He had to get out of the fire, find a place on the island that no fire had reached yet. Some small place.

Ash blew into his eyes, threatening to choke him, and his streaming eyes made things hard to see. He crawled, slowly and deliberately, over to the tiny gap. He wouldn't be getting out of here without burns. He knew that now. Why didn't he ever consider that fire and ice weren't meant to work together? One was always meant to destroy the other, in the end.

And if he didn't get out soon, that was what was going to happen to him.

#### 4. Chapter 4

\*\*A/N: Alright, witches. Here's the next chapter. Some pretty major angst C: please enjoy! \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>The ash swirled thickly around him, shielding everything from sight. Hiccup swatted lightly at the smoky particles, looking around for Jack. The frost boy was not right behind him and it troubled Hiccup. He squinted around the area, dead and burned grass crunching beneath his feet.<p>

"Jack?" Hiccup called uncertainly, stumbling over bodies, some unconscious from the smoke inhalation, faces bright red. Some had already died but the inferno had not yet eaten up what was left. Hiccup tripped over his own feet, kicking a brown-haired Viking off to one side, letting the fire claim him, too.

A sudden breeze stirred up more ash and smoke, causing Hiccup to wipe at his watering eyes so he could see. "Jack!" His voice echoed hollowly on the empty island. There was nobody left alive or conscious to answer. The panic began to set in. What had he been thinking? Jack was ice and he had locked him in an inferno. He had literally had him trapped inside a winter king's worst nightmare.

He tried telling himself that it was some sort of ashy mixture and not tears that stung his eyes. He stepped over another fallen body. The temperature rose steadily as he checked piles of rubble, every body he found, half-destroyed homes and even the blackened, ashy

forests for his friend. The boy was nowhere to be seen. He was simply lost.

The fire began to start up again, stronger this time. The smoke was thicker. The flames were raging, out-of-control, unstoppably angry. "Jack!" he cried, beginning to stumble around a bit, unable to see thanks to the ashes and the tears. The flames followed in his wake as he hit his knees, crawling forward and calling for his friend, silently begging Jack to answer.

When the white hair and pale skin first became visible among the flames, Hiccup calmed a bit. As a result, the heat dropped as well. The fire was temporarily soothed as Hiccup rose unsteadily to his feet again, his legs shaking beneath him as he ran towards the other boy, cradling him in his arms like a treasure.

He was breathing, Hiccup noted with relief and a sob worked its way out of his throat as more tears began to fall from his eyes. Oh, yes, he was breathing, but he was out cold and every breath he took sounded labored. Hiccup hugged Jack closer to him, feeling fresh tears begin to form in his eyes. A few of them traveled down his cheeks as he held his friend.

"Jack!" he breathed unsteadily, wiping the boy's hair out of his face so he could see the tightly closed eyes. "Jack, I'm sorry! please be okay! please!" he hugged the boy closer to him, hoping and praying with everything in him that his only friend would be okay.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack awoke slowly and, when he did, he was somewhere warm. Almost too warm. Weak, thin arms encased him and he felt something burning hot and wet hit his face. Blinking, he opened his eyes, staring up into the face of the person who held him.<p>

Green eyes filled with tears stared back at him; worried hands stroked his thick white hair frantically, uncertainly. "Jack, please be okay." whispered a voice above him worriedly. A young voice. A familiar voice.

"Hiccup?" he rasped weakly, trying to sit up, to get a better look.

Hiccup gave a small start at seeing his friend come to so soon. Jack could almost hear the other boy's heartbeat, painfully fast, leaving him breathless. "I'm here, okay?"

Why was his throat so scratchy, his tongue so hard to lift? Why did his eyes feel like someone was insistently pressing on the lids? All he wanted to do was sleep, and something about his consciousness seemed to have jarred Hiccup, although he couldn't think why. He was burning hot all over, and all he wanted to do was create some ice to bury himself in, or maybe a snowdrift!

He tried to sit up, but Hiccup pushed him gently back down, a worried look creasing his face. "Jack!"

"I'm hot," Jack mumbled.

Hiccup's lips tightened. Jack thought he saw a few tears cascading down the boy's cheeks, and he couldn't understand why. There was nothing to cry about, right? "I'm so sorry, Jack."

"Not your fault, is it?" Jack panted, allowing Hiccup to push him down this time, settling himself back in the other boy's arms. "Whatâ€¦what happened to me?"

"We'll get you somewhere cold," Hiccup promised. "C'mon."

Throwing a strangely dark look over his shoulder, he rose, trying to bring Jack with him, but the instant he was on his feet was the same instant in which he was back on the ground, stumbling under the other boy's weight.

Jack couldn't help but laugh at the surprise written all over Hiccup's face; it was like the boy had expected Jack to be light as a feather. Hiccup didn't laugh; his face remained serious, and he reached for Jack again.

"It's okay." Jack reassured him. "I can walk."

Hiccup's face remained tight and pale from worry, but he didn't protest. He waited for Jack to get all the way across the water on shaky legs and only then would he cross it himself. Jack turned to watch his friend crossing, and his eyes fell on the island they had just left. It was a smoking, burning wreck of an area and suddenly his blood ran cold as he watched Hiccup creating a small inferno to carry him across. Suddenly he remembered what had happened, and why it had happened, and why he felt so tired and weak. He remembered Hiccup's face, the almost insane, perverse joy he had taken in killing all those people and destroying all those homes. The grin on the other boy's face had spoken for him and, as Jack remembered it, he suddenly felt afraid. He wanted to run then, to get as far away from Hiccup as possible, but he knew that he wouldn't. Hiccup had scared him back on that island; he had terrified him, really. But Jack could make things right.

No, he couldn't bring those people back to life, and he couldn't stop the inferno now claiming the dead island as its own. Jack was sure that, by the end of the night, not a single inhabitant would be left alive. He tried not to let his mind stray to all those poor people, being murdered so mercilessly in their beds, maybe mothers holding tiny children in their arms, assuring them it would be okayâ€¦?

Jack surprised himself by having to blink back sudden tears. He couldn't remember the last time he had cried, and oddly enough, he felt like doing so for people he had hardly known. And now he would never know them. He wanted to say something to his friend, to show the boy that what he had done was wrong. But, when Hiccup reached their spot, Jack had not thought up a single thing to say, so what came tumbling out was the truth.

"Hiccupâ€¦that fireâ€¦you killed people."

"And they would have killed us, had they been able to." Hiccup whispered bitterly, staring down at his hands. From all the fire that had touched his palms, they should have been bright red and blistered, but those discomforts were instead found on Jack's skin. Not for the first time since the fire had started, Hiccup felt the

stirrings of shame. He had hurt his best friend. The frost boy had only wanted to be there for Hiccup, and this was how he repaid him?

Hiccup tried not to notice the way Jack was avoiding looking at him, but a sudden fear clenched his heart: was Jack afraid of him? He hadn't meant to hurt the boy, but the bright red burns littering the bits of pale skin he could see said otherwise. Like he had intended to hurt him, like he had wanted to. Hiccup had cried too much today already, and he didn't want to shed more tears, but he could feel them stinging his eyes all the same.

"I'm sorry," he whispered, finding himself unable to meet the other boy's eye, so he studied the ground. The grass around him died as he clenched his hands into fists, his imagination torturing him with images of Jack trapped in an inferno, utterly helpless, laying there dying, trying to breathe through thick smoke. But of course he wouldn't be able to breathe, because he was a winter boy, and Hiccup was literally made for fire. And Hiccup now thought he knew that they could never exist peaceably. "Some say the world will end in ice, others say in fireâ€¦." \_

His eyes fell on the burns he had left on Jack's skin, and his guilt worsened. "I'mâ€¦I'm so sorry," he managed to stammer, and suddenly the words were flowing freely from him now. For just a moment, he was the Hiccup that Jack remembered, gentle and shy and apologetic as always. "I never meant to hurt you that way. I forgot that you'reâ€¦I didn't meanâ€¦you're my best friend, Jack. I would never hurt you, never."

Jack stared down at his hands for a long second, listening to the words wash over him. They fell from Hiccup's tongue easily and they sounded honest to the frost boy's ears. But it wasn't his own pain or suffering that bothered him. "If you're sorry for hurting me, why aren't you sorry for hurting all those people?"

Hiccup's green eyes suddenly hardened, and again Jack had that feeling that was becoming all too familiar. The feeling that he really didn't know Hiccup anymore. "They deserved it," he snarled. "You can't say you don't remember what they did to us. Or that you've forgiven it."

"No, I haven't forgiven or forgotten." Jack replied quietly. "But I can't justify wiping out a whole village on a whim because a few people in there wronged us. I'm sorry, Hiccup, but I don't understand what could possibly have led you to that point. I don't understand why you've become a murderer."

"M-murderer?" Hiccup stammered, his face flushing â€" shame, embarrassment, or anger? Jack wondered. "I was only raining vengeance down on them for what they did to us! For years! They should consider themselves lucky I only killed them! What they inflicted on us was a fate so much worse than death!"

"Vengeance?" Jack arched an eyebrow. "Well, then go on â€" I'm speaking out against you."

Hiccup looked confused. "What do you mean?"

"I'm speaking out against you, Hiccup. You remember how they called

you monster? You're a murderer. That's what I'm saying. You killed people in cold blood for calling you a monster. What are you going to do to me if I call you a name?"

"They did so much worse than call me a monster!" Hiccup screamed, his face twisted in rage. "Don't pretend you don't know what they did! And I wasn't just doing it for myself, you know! I was doing it for you, too! I was doing it for my friend!"

"And you still haven't answered my question," Jack replied. "If I say you're a murderer, or a monster, what will you do to me?"

## 5. Chapter 5

\*\*A/N: YES OKAY. YES. I am willingly ignoring that I have NOT updated It's a Scary world out there, but just shhhhh. okay? C: I am quite happy working on this one. I think I like this one better because the angst levels are higher C: bah. well. anyway. I'll attempt to update one of these fics within the week (please keep in mind, I am sick though, so I'll try to balance it between them): It's a Scary World Out There, Untold or Overachiever C: Possibly Gift or Curse, because I can just feel the angst in that fic beginning C: \*\*

\*\*Anyway, I love you all for your reviews, please keep leaving them! Chapters should become a bit more frequent, as the one after this was originally the chapter I had an idea for.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>There was a short silence.<p>

"Well?" Jack demanded.

"Get out of here," Hiccup ordered. "Just get away from me!"

"Are you going to hurt me, then?"

"I already have." Hiccup's eyes flickered down to Jack's burned, bright pink arm; the white haired boy could swear he saw guilt in the other's eyes.

"What? Should I leave before you hurt me even worse?" Jack demanded, taking a step closer to him.

"Something like that." Hiccup whispered darkly.

"Is that all you're gonna say?" Jack demanded, trying to step in front of the other boy. Although Hiccup was a few months older than he was, Jack was taller, and he stared down at the copper haired boy for a second or two. Hiccup was the first to look away. Strange â€" that position normally rested with Jack. And the anger normally rested with Hiccup.

"Just go away!" Hiccup burst out, reaching out both arms like he was going to shove Jack back, or burn him.

Jack may have been young, but his short life had taught him several things already; one of these things was that whenever somebody reached out like they were going to hurt you, you stepped back and

waited for the blow, no questions asked. He did much the same thing then, stumbling backward, dropping his head so his white bangs concealed his crystal blue eyes from Hiccup's view.

Hiccup hadn't realized what he'd done at first; his angry reaction had been so fierce and immediate he hadn't stopped to think. But now he stopped to think. He stared down at his hands for a second, unwilling to believe what he had so nearly done. What he had done, he reminded himself a bit guiltily, his eyes flickering down once more towards the other boy's arm.

Instantly, Hiccup's wild anger vanished and he was the same gentle person he had been when he was young. A part of his younger self lurked beneath the surface â€" very deep beneath it. "I'mâ€¦I'm sorry," he began, reaching out for the other boy. "I'mâ€¦I'm really sorryâ€¦"

"No, you're right," Jack avoided the other boy's eyes as he rose to his feet once more. "I really should just go."

"Jackâ€¦"

"No, you're right." Jack turned to go, beginning to streak back the way he'd come, deviating a bit off his ice path so he wouldn't return to the burned island. Hiccup watched his best friend until the other boy had become nothing but a streak in the distance.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack ran with his head down, watching his ice beginning to run in a different direction, carrying him away from the burning island. He couldn't help those people now. The only thing he could think, or see, in his mind's eye, was Hiccup reaching out to shove him, the anger burning in his eyes, the fire sparking feebly in his palms. He'd been pushed a lot in his life â€" physically and emotionally. But he'd never thought he'd see Hiccup going towards him with his arms outstretched, his brows drawn down into a scowl.<p>

He never stopped running, never pausing to stop and think about what he was going to do now. Did it matter what he planned to do? He was free now. And he couldn't have done some of the things he'd wanted to, anyway â€" Hiccup was no longer there by his side. No matter how many pledges or promises they had broken these past few days, Jack knew it wouldn't feel right, to do these things they had promised to do together. It wouldn't feel right to do them without Hiccup by his side.

He continued to run, beginning to get a bit out of breath, but he would not stop and he would not glance back, either. Glancing back would mean his eyes would eventually run into Hiccup, and if he saw the other boy, he wasn't sure whether or not he would be able to keep running. He would stand there on his path of ice and hesitate and wonder whether he could forget about that smoking, ruined village still issuing smoke and steam into the pale purple sky. A few evening stars twinkled above him.

He didn't glance back. He turned and kept running.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup saw him hesitate. He saw him look up at the sky uncertainly, and his heart lifted a bit with hope. But Jack didn't even look back. He just started running again, like he didn't even remember that there was someone waiting for him. Like he didn't even know that Hiccup wanted or needed to apologize.<p>

Hiccup ducked into the trees and began to pace the clearing at a rather brisk pace, staring down each and every tree like they held the answers to why Jack had stopped, why he had bothered to get Hiccup's hopes up and then crush them again. Hiccup could feel the fire beginning to start in his palms and, unlike when he had been imprisoned, he didn't bother to try to keep it in. He just aimed it so it couldn't hurt anyone. The fiery blast felled a tree and it came out more lava than fire.

This was surprising, Hiccup noted to himself, glancing down at his hands. Trying to distract himself from Jack's frantic pace on that path of ice. This really was surprising. He had never known he could make lava before.

"The things you find out when you're finally free," he mumbled to himself, a bit bitterly. His voice didn't carry a tinge of anger; if anything, he sounded lonely and hollow. And he was. He thought he'd feel better once that island was destroyed, but ever since, he'd only felt worse. He'd thought that there was a hole in him, a void that could be filled with revenge. But it didn't feel that way anymore. The void had only grown bigger. If he didn't fight back, it could very easily take him over.

So he did fight back. He shot his lava blasts at all the trees until his aim with them was perfect. Once the trees had all fallen from his blasts, he summoned an inferno, watching the trees give in to the heat, listening to animals roaring, squeaking, squealing, fighting, running for cover. He smiled slightly to himself. For a moment, he wasn't thinking of Jack or the island he had burned.

And then it came rushing back. He scowled, throwing his arms out again, calling forth more fire, craving the terrible flames to come shooting out of his hands. And when they did, the victorious smile on his face and the swooping happiness in his stomach didn't feel like him. He felt, a bit uncomfortably, like these things belonged to someone else. Someone vicious, someone monstrous.

And then he pushed those thoughts away. He was not vicious. He was completely, one hundred percent normal.

Wellâ€|except the flames coming out of his fingertips, but I mean, come on. That was kind of awesome.

## 6. Chapter 6

\*\*A/N: Well, I'm back! I hope you guys enjoy this and I'm really sorry it took so long. I'm gonna try and update something else tonight as well...\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Frost trails crept onto the ground at regular intervals, leaving fern-like patterns on tree trunks, turning the leaves shining white.



The dead autumn leaves that had already fluttered to the ground were covered with a fine layer of glittering white powder, and ice crystals glittered at every few feet.<p>

Icicles hung from every branch, swinging back and forth in the gusts of cool September wind. It was a bit early for frost to be showing up, but you couldn't deny the early winter was beautiful.

Most people who ventured through the forest decided to turn back as the temperature continued to drop; but if you were quite the determined traveler, then you could follow the swinging icicles and the sparkling crystals and you would happen upon a singularly beautiful clearing. The most magnificent of homes sat in this clearing, glowing and winking different colors of winter in the sunlight.

Purple double doors were tightly shut and bolted; the snowflake imprint upon them was a beautiful work of art. There were no windows on the pale blue walls, no way for any inhabitants inside the house to look out. More importantly, there was no way for anybody outside to look in.

Here is where you would find Jack Frost, in this modest ice building. Snow covered the ground of his home as well, but he drank in the cold temperatures, staring up at the ceiling of the castle. It had taken a lot of power out of him to create this beautiful place, and sometimes he found his powers hard to control. The evidence of this was the snow on the ground outside, the marks of winter on every tree.

He frowned as he remembered the temperature outside; he was worried that the signs of winter wouldn't melt, and he knew he had to be careful. If anybody found out what he was capable of, what he could doâ€¦|

He shuddered at the very thought. He had spent quite enough of his life locked up, and he wasn't going to do it anymore.

But he wasn't going to be like his friend, either. Hiccup truly enjoyed the brutality of the kills, but Jack knew he never could. He could hurt somebody, he could kill them, if it meant his own safety, but he would never want to. And he wouldn't enjoy it.

His frown grew as he thought of Hiccup, and his brows drew together. They had been like brothers their whole life. They had been best friends. Jack had been scared and sad all those years in that cell, but he had never wanted for company. He had never known what it would be like, life without the red-haired boy.

Although he knew ice was his friend's polar opposite, the castle felt lonely and empty without him. He felt that Hiccup belonged there. So many pledges and promises, so many years and nights spent comforting each other, it was all blown away in a single instant. Sure, Hiccup had talked before of burning the island down to the ground, but Jack had brushed it off. He'd always thought Hiccup was just shouting things in anger. How could he have meant it? How could he have done it?

The castle didn't feel right without Hiccup. Jack glanced down at his pale hands, feeling the power beginning to build again, sensing the floor was about to get another coating of snow.

\* \* \*

><p>Ash and soot stung the man's eyes as he walked, looking around himself at the wreckage. All the reports of forest fires near this area lately; some people were starting to joke that dragons were on the loose.<p>

He rolled his eyes as he thought of it. These people didn't understand just how serious the forest fires were.

The man ducked under a branch to avoid scraping his head and, when he looked up, he had emerged into a clearing. The spot may have been beautiful once, but now it looked barren and desolate. The grass was dead and brown, crunching beneath the man's boots as he walked.

But the dead desolation was more than made up for by the beauty of the glittering, orange building sitting smack dab in between the two sides ringed by trees. The man stumbled a bit, his mouth slightly open.

The beauty could not be denied; but the doors were thrown wide open, as though people had fled just shortly. He could only wonder how the building had survived all the fires around this region.

He didn't know it, but his questions were about to be answered. Answered, no less, by a red-haired boy walking into the clearing from another entrance, a fiery orange cloak swinging from his shoulders. His sleeves were like tongues of flame, snaking up his arm. His forest green eyes were bright and rather cheerful, but there was a certain guarded look to them. He couldn't have been much older than twelve, but the look in his eyes let the man know that he had seen quite a lot.

The man watched as the boy walked up the steps, touching the railing leading to the doorway like everything was familiar. Almost like he lived here. The man stepped forward. "Excuse me," he coughed.

The boy froze, turning slowly on the spot. His knuckles had gone very white on the rail, and his hand was shaking. "Yes, sir?"

"I only wanted to know if you'd heard about all the fires around this spot." The man edged a bit closer, surprised to find the boy backing up another step.

"Indeed, I have." A half-smile tugged at the boy's lip, as though he were enjoying a private joke.

"Then you know it would be unwise to stay here," the man replied.

"I'm not afraid," the boy said simply.

"Afraid or not, these forests are dangerous places right now," the man responded firmly. And then he looked back up at the orange building, a concerned frown beginning on his face. "Is your family with you? May I speak with them?"

"I have no family." The boy responded curtly, turning to go back in.

"You're a bit young to be out on your own, aren't you, son?" The man's voice had a concerned note that made the boy's knuckles whiten even more. "How old are you?"

The boy considered for a moment. "Old enough."

The man raised an eyebrow. "This is a dangerous place to be in right now. If I were you, I would be on my way."

A shadow of a smile tugged at the boy's lips as he looked down at his hands. "I'm not concerned for my own safety. I'm not afraid of fire."

The man's brow knitted as he saw the boy turn slowly. Before he could even register what had happened, ask himself if he was losing his mind, he saw the redhead throw his hands out sharply. Something bright orange shot out of his palms, enveloping the man in a single blast. And then a few ashes crumbled to the ground. The spot where he had stood smoked slightly.

Hiccup's smile was twisted â€" that of a madman. He walked over to where the ashes still sat and he kicked them, scattered them around, letting the wind carry them away. "Like I said," he whispered, although he knew the man who had once been there could not possibly hear him anymore, "I am not afraid of fire."

## 7. Chapter 7

\*\*A/N: Sorry it's so uneventful.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>The desolate wasteland stretched on, completely unbroken except for the fiery orange building set in the still smoking clearing, like some perverse monument to the arsonist. Bodies littered the ground; the people in the nearby village who had tried to find the cause of the forest fires. There was also a small pile of ashes on the cracked, dry ground, but Hiccup rarely ever so much as glanced down at it.<p>

As the weeks stretched on, he slowly cleaned up the dead bodies, burning them further, reducing everybody entirely to ashes. The village was losing many people, but becoming ever nosier about the fires. Hiccup idly considered just wiping out the whole thing and being done with it. But moving on was not an option. He had claimed this forest as his.

But what if, he wondered to himself one day as he sat in his house of heat and fire, what if he were to claim more places as his own? What if he were to leave his mark upon other places of the earth, what if he were to leave his mark upon all the earth? The world would never forget the fiery Armageddon that rained down upon them. The people would speak his name with equal parts awe and fear, and he would be remembered, respected. Feared. He would be feared. People would look at him with terror in their eyes.

He remembered the terrified, panicked screams of the villagers he had attacked just a few weeks back, and he smiled slightly to himself.

That had felt amazing, knowing that many people were afraid of him. Knowing he controlled their puny little lives. For all the years of being constantly at someone else's mercy, it felt good to be feared. Perhaps a little too good.

He then remembered Jack's horror for the whole idea, his reluctance to go along with it. But he had gone along with it anyway, because he worried Hiccup might need him.

The copper-haired boy suddenly clenched his hands into fists. This mark upon the earth that he planned to leave—what if he accidentally hurt Jack in the process? Jack could not survive in the same fiery wasteland as he could. What would the white-haired boy do?

And then Hiccup firmly pushed his once best friend out of his mind. Jack was a coward, and a fool, and he had chosen a different path from Hiccup's. He would learn the same way as everyone else, the hard way, what a path that deviated from Hiccup's meant.

It would mean pain. It meant a horrible death. Oh, he would applaud him for his bravery, his attempt to stand against him, but in the end, Jack would have to meet the same fate as everyone else.

Still, Hiccup's heart clenched when he dared think about it. He collapsed on the ground of his home, his knees shaking as he imagined Jack's pale face, laughing blue eyes closing for the final time, the fun-loving smile that Hiccup had so rarely glimpsed fading. Never to be seen again. Would sweat be coating his brow as he glanced around at the flames? Would he try to think of a way out of it? Would he cry, would he beg? Would Hiccup feel mercy?

The trembling in the boy's legs increased and he stood, sweeping out the door and throwing his fiery blasts everywhere, letting it engulf the already dead wasteland. There was nothing more to help the flames grow and they died quickly.

Hiccup let out a shout of rage when he realized his fire could no longer burn. Lava rained down, seemingly from the sky. The fire tried feebly to burn, licking at the ground, springing temporarily to life before dying again. And as Hiccup yelled in a fierce rage, he realized the fire couldn't burn because he had left it nothing to burn. He had forced it to take up all of its fuel so many days ago, and now he felt the power building, knowing he wouldn't feel a true release until he saw something burn.

So he ran, racing away from his palace of fire, staring around wildly, looking for something to burn. Dead grass and twigs crunched loudly under his boots, his palms sparking every five seconds. No trees. They had all been lost in his feverish rage. The grass was dead and brown, hard under his feet. His heart pounded as he ran before stumbling upon an untouched place in the forest. Beautiful emerald green grass that he collapsed upon in trembling relief. Trees that ringed the tiny meadow, their leaves shimmering in the sunlight. A tiny stream bubbled happily and he could see the fish in the clear water, swimming and splashing their tails happily.

For a moment, he smiled, hugging his knees to his chest. The urge to ruin the perfect scene faded. How could he kill this? How could he harm these trees, kill this grass? How could he take away all this

life, from the leaves swaying in the breeze to the fish jumping up and down in the water? He smiled for a bit to himself, watching the fish. His hands drifted into the water and he reached down for the underwater plants, enjoying the feeling of the cool water splashing over his hands.

And then the water frothed and hissed angrily, the plant died just from his touch and the fish instantly swam away, as if he were a huge, ugly shark. And his smile faded just as suddenly as it had come, and he yanked his dripping hands out of the water.

He scowled to himself, shook his hands free of the water, and allowed his fire to eat up this little bit of life. Who the hell cared if he killed this place, anyway? He was born to kill.

## 8. Chapter 8

\*\*A/N: Okay, second update of today! I really hope you guys like it, and it will get the story moving more! Next chapter should include some Jack, but for some reason, I'm really horrible with this story XD I'm just like, 'okay. Hiccup kills people. Jack builds an ice palace. Hiccup kills MORE people. Ah, who needs a Jack scene, anyway?' XD \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Of course, things were not exactly going perfectly for the king of summer, anyway.<p>

It seemed that the village was smarter than he gave him credit for, Hiccup scowled, shoving his door closed forcefully and sinking down to his butt. He really should have thought of this. He should go right out there and incinerate the lot of them, but then Jack's words floated back to him: \_"People will see your power and want it for themselves!" \_

If even one of the determined, idiotic Vikings out there making a clumsy attempt at spying on him survived and ran around using their big mouth to tell what they had seen, the consequences could be disastrous. Much as he hated to admit it, or even think about Jack in his spare time, the winter boy was right. Hiccup didn't want to risk being caught.

What to do, then? he wondered to himself, shrinking down farther, closer to the floor. He certainly couldn't stay in the building the whole day. For one, the cabin fever would drive him crazy. And for another, the village would begin to wonder. No, best to face them head-on, he decided, looking nervously out one of the many windows.

He slowly pushed open the heavy door, the symbol of fire becoming clear as the doors fit together. He leaned on the porch and tried to think what to do. Let them know he knew? He took a deep breath, forced a tight little smile and called, "Alright! I know you're out there! Come on out, I just want to talk."

He sensed many people whispering, their voices all flowing together like the rustling of leaves and he sighed, sitting down on the porch steps. When a man at last stumbled out of the woods and into the

clearing, Hiccup opted for a quick, almost friendly smile. "What's your name?"

The man was clearly nervous about facing him alone, as if he thought a teenage boy was an honest threat. But upon seeing Hiccup up close, the freckled face, the kind green eyes, he said, in a bit of a stronger voice than perhaps he might previously have used, "We'd like to know what you're doing in our forest, Freckles."

\_Freckles? \_Hiccup instantly recoiled at the nickname, giving a bit of an awkward cough. "As you can see, I live here. Andâ€|my name's not Freckles. I'm Hiccup."

"Right. But, the point is, you might have noticed this by now, but we've been noticing a lot of forest fires lately, andâ€|we were just wondering why you'd be sticking around here, somewhere so close to the crimesâ€|"

"Ahhhâ€|" Hiccup dragged out the word, closing his eyes and leaning back. His eyes snapped open again, focusing on the man in front of him. "I see. You think I'm the culprit, don't you?"

"I didn't say that." the man instantly countered.

"You might as well have." Hiccup responded. "It's alright. It's a perfectly natural question, under the circumstances. I'll tell you what I've told the others whom asked: I'm not afraid of fire."

The man licked his lips. "Is that your reason for staying here? This isn't a game, child. You play with fire, and you'll get burned â€" literally this time."

Hiccup's lips twitched, threatening a smile. "Good thing I'm not playing a game, then. Good day."

"You haven't answered my question."

"Sir, Iâ€"you still haven't told me your name. May I get one?"

The man hesitated. "Call me Sulk. Everybody does."

"Alright, then, Sulk." The name rolled off Hiccup's tongue easily. "Sulk, I'm not the one starting these fires. I have absolutely no idea who is."

"Really?" Now that Hiccup had made no harmful moves, a few other villagers appeared to be getting braver; a woman with long, dark hair and intelligent eyes stepped out from the small woodland area and put a hand on Sulk's shoulder. Hiccup's eyes flickered over to the vast expanse of green. He must remember to burn that laterâ€|

"Your doors have a fire symbol on them."

Hiccup turned to look at the doors and shrugged. "Mere coincidence, and who says I have built this myself? This isn't the work of one man, in case you haven't noticed."

"It is suspicious, though," the woman responded harshly. He could only really assume she was Sulk's wife. "You spring up, and suddenly fires are starting out of nowhere. So, why are you setting fire to

our forests?"

"I'm not!"

"We depend on them! You can't just take them away from us!"

And Hiccup felt his palms beginning to heat up, and he clenched his hands into fists, his anger beginning to rise. And then, he took a deep, calming breath, looked between the man and his wife and said softly, "I'm sorry for the misunderstanding. There were a few fires in some forests very near here that must not have reached your village's ears yet. I hope to catch the criminal and I'm looking everywhere for him."

There was a stiff, tense silence. A few villagers began emerging from the trees, looking shyly at Hiccup. A girl about his age was giving him a much longer first look than necessary, but he hardly noticed her; his eyes were fixed on Sulk, waiting for him to speak.

But he would never know who made the accusation, only what happened next.

"Liar."

And then the fire engulfed every villager in the clearing, reaching out long, fiery fingers to catch the ones who tried to run and Sulk collapsed to the ground, a mere body at Hiccup's feet. Hiccup kicked the man aside, watching the fire claim the pathetic little village. Well, he had tried, he told himself, and that was enough for right now. He had tried not to raise too many eyebrows, and it hadn't worked.

"You monster!" somebody in the fire screamed.

"What is he?" yelled another.

"He's a curse!"

"A freak!"

"A sorcerer!"

"RUN!"

Little did they know, their words were kindling, fueling the fire, spurring it to greater heights, the words echoing in his ears.

\_Monster? \_The blood pounded in his ears and he felt a sort of blush heating his face. \_Curse? Freak? Sorcerer?\_

And then he urged the fire onward, letting it devour every moving body in front of him and he kicked at them and screamed, and burned their remains to ashes. And then he yelled a bit more, yelled about how he was not a monster. He was never going to be a monster. And then he burned that big green woodland still living and breathing, and he hated it for being so beautiful and perfect and everything he could never be. He hated it for giving life when all he could ever do was take it away.

And then, with nothing left to do, with nowhere else to go, he  
\_ran\_.

## 9. Chapter 9

**\*\*A/N:** This chapter is pure crap, and I'm really sorry. I had all this backstory originally planned out, I just didn't think about ever putting it in here. If it would be, it would be mentioned in passing, but then I thought, how could Jack possibly know about these things if he was locked up his whole life? So, this chapter begged to be written. But it's horrible and I'm really sorry. I'll make it up to you with the next chapter. **\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>Jack found he didn't leave his ice palace very often, but when he did, it was often for simple reasons: fetching food or water or maybe just a desire to fill his lungs with fresh air. He would stand outside, looking up at the early morning sun, and he would take several deep breaths, inhaling deeply and exhaling slowly. He would stare up at the brilliant blue sky and smile, and he would add a fresh coating of snow to the ground, covering the leaves with a bit more frost than the early September warmth still threatened to steal away every morning.<p>

He would stroll leisurely down the forest path and take in the sheer beauty that still stood here, the trees' leaves rustling in the breeze, the ice and snow crunching beneath his bare feet. He glanced down at the carpet of dead, brown leaves and smiled a bit, glancing up at the sky. Over his head, birds were twittering and the wind was passing through.

No, he didn't often leave his ice palace, but on that walk, on one of the few times he did, an old man came into his clearing as Jack prepared to enter his home once more. He had his hands up, smiling into the sky, letting the snow and ice fall freely from his fingertips before realizing there was movement out of the corner of his eye. He instantly let his hands drop and looked fearfully at the old man standing there. Although his hair and beard were white, there was something about him — perhaps the twin swords that were in scabbards at his sides, or his blue eyes with a cheerful twinkle — that made him seem young.

Jack hesitated, his hands clenching into fists by his sides. The old man had seen that, had seen him using his powers, and now he waited for the man to scream at him that he was a sorcerer, a freak, to turn him over to the nearest village, or run screaming to tell them, either way.

But the first words that he spoke were unexpected. "Oh, go on," the man said quietly, with a courteous nod. "Don't stop on my account. I only like to watch."

Jack took a step backward. "Don't do that. Don't act all innocent. The second I turn my back, you're gonna go running off to the nearest village, aren't you?"

"That would be unwise." The man responded. "Potentially harmful," he added, with a bit of a wince, as if he had tried that before and it



had ended badly. "And boring." he finished simply. "I don't have plans to tell anyone about what I just saw. I was only watching. I don't think I've ever seen an elemental before," he smiled slightly.

"Whatâ€|what do you mean?" Jack whispered. It was strange, especially after fourteen years â€| although of course he had no way to tell how old he was â€| of telling himself not to trust anyone except Hiccup, it was strange that he suddenly felt trust flaring to life. He shouldn't have taken to this man so quickly, but something about him seemed trustworthy, it seemed safe.

"Oh, waitâ€|" The man paused, and an expression of great sadness overtook his face. "Yes, I have."

"What are you talking about?" Jack repeated, daring to edge a bit closer now.

The man ran a hand over his face, as if he were trying to wash away the memories. "Don't mind meâ€|I'm talking to myself. I do it all the time, now." Again, that look of horrible sadness, and Jack had the feeling that the man had seen some terrible things in his lifetime.

"No, I meanâ€|" Jack looked down at his hands. "You know about me? My power?" He hesitated a bit before asking the rest. "And you're okay with it?"

The man raised a thick, white eyebrow. "You're an elemental, a winter elemental, and nobody's told you about me?"

"No." Jack shook his head, deciding not to inform him that he had lived in a cell for the better part of his short life. "Whoâ€|who are you?" he took a few steps closer, intrigued.

"Nicholas," the man replied simply. "Nicholas North, if you want my surname, as well. I'm the Trainer."

"Ofâ€|?"

"Magic."

"Like my ice?" Jack glanced up, thousands more questions in his eyes.

"Exactly like it." North nodded. And then he gave Jack a strange look. "Surely you must have met others like you before?"

"There are more?" Jack's eyebrows disappeared into his white hair. "I mean, of course there are, you said yourself that you knew an elemental onceâ€|but are there really more people who make ice orâ€|or fire come out of their hands?"

North hesitated. "Not fire," he admitted softly. "Or ice. Elementals are known for being the hardest to control, the hardest to teach. Fire does what it wants, and ice only thaws in the face of fire. The two elementals that possess that power would either be unstoppable or destroy each other." He gave Jack another long look, and the boy tugged self-consciously at his makeshift, raggedy blue hoodie. Those twinkling blue eyes seemed to suggest they knew more about the

white-haired boy than North was letting on.

"We've been searching for you," he added softly. Despite his gentle tone, the words still caused the boy's blue eyes to widen in fear. "Not like that. We don't want to hurt you."

It was as if the man knew what Jack was thinking. He didn't relax, standing rigidly. His panic screamed at him to run, but curiosity kept him locked in place. "If not to hurt me, then why do you want me?"

"We don't want you." It seemed as if North was trying to find a tactful way to put it. "What I mean is, there are only four elementals in the world and they represent the four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, winter. The winter and the summer we just concluded that they'd gone the same way the others had." His blue eyes darkened from cerulean daylight to dusk. "But winter is still here." And he smiled slowly, his eyes beginning to regain their twinkle.

"What do you mean, the same way the others have?" Jack questioned, brushing his white bangs out of his face. "And I'm not the only one left, there's still summâ€" and then he stopped himself. He still wasn't entirely sure whether or not he could trust this man, but if he had to be locked away again, he wasn't taking Hiccup down with him.

North's eyes widened. "There's another elemental?"

Jack hesitated for a moment, and his silence told North everything the man needed to know.

"How have we missed you two for so long?" he whispered, and then he seemed to realize something even better than finding two elementals, because his smile grew a bit more. "And you two have parted ways without the Final Duel?"

"F-final Duel?" Jack stammered uncertainly.

The smile dropped suddenly from North's face. "You don't know about the Final Duel?"

Things were moving much too fast for Jack, and he sank slowly down onto the snow-covered grass. "Iâ€" I don't understand," he said numbly. "I don't understand anything. Whatâ€" what's the Final Duel?" he looked up at North for a second, a bit of ice beginning to cover the grass as well with how confused he felt. "And you still haven't explained to me what being the Trainer of Magic means, or why you've been looking for me for so long."

North slowly knelt down next to him. Jack had had a lot of people kneeling down to his eye level in his life, and this normally meant that they planned to hit him. He shrank back a bit from the man, but North didn't seem to notice. "Iâ€" I train," he began uncertainly. "What I mean is, I train people like you in controlling their powers."

This sounded horrible to Jack, to whom controlling powers meant locking them away in a cell and telling them to shut up and sit still and not speak until they found a way to cure them.

"And I don't mean controlling powers as you might have heard it," North added sharply when he saw the expression on the boy's face. "What I mean is, if you don't know how to control your powers, you might end up sending the whole world an early winter. Not just an early winter, but an eternal winter. You could never find a way to melt the snow and thaw the ice. People would get frostbite and millions would die." He paused for a moment. "Too much of one season is a terrible thing," he added softly. "For me, teaching you control means trying to gently guide you, to show you different ways to melt the snow. That's what I mean when I say that."

Jack looked down at his hands for a long moment. "And you said something about knowing other elementals. What are the other two like? Fall and spring? Did you train them, too?"

Again, that expression of sadness. North nodded slowly, the twinkle leaving his blue eyes. "I knew them both and I trained them both. Wonderful girls and fast learners, the both of them well" and then his mouth dragged down at the corners.

"Do you know where I could find them?" Jack asked tentatively. He had a feeling that the more elementals he knew, the more he could find out from them.

North gave a soft, sad sigh. "They're gone."

"Gone?" Jack sat up, intrigued. "What do you mean, gone? Were they were they taken, too?"

North nodded. "They're gone now."

And suddenly Jack understood the sadness in every line of the man's face, and a strange sadness filled his heart. He didn't know the two girls North spoke of, but he felt like a connection, a bond he didn't even know existed, had just been broken by this news. As if he had just discovered he had siblings somewhere, only to find that they were dead.

"Oh." Jack whispered. "I'm so sorry."

"It's" North shook it off with a shake of his head, as if the reminder was merely irksome. "It's an elemental hazard. What more do you want to know?"

And then Jack hesitated a bit. He suddenly had a new world of information at his fingertips, and he could ask anything he wanted. Suddenly, he didn't feel like an unwanted freak or something for people to whisper and stare at and judge. The realization that there were other people like him, besides Hiccup, made him feel less alone.

## 10. Chapter 10

**\*\*A/N:** This chapter isn't quite as bad as the last one. I hope it's not. Please don't flame. Hiccup will come right back at you with more flames, I think. Thank you for all the reviews, please keep leaving them. They make me happy :) **\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>Jack stared up at the sky, his head filled with so many thoughts, he wasn't even sure which ones to pay attention to anymore. North sat beside him still, and he showed no discomfort although more snow was beginning to fall from the sky, representing the winter teen's feelings.<p>

When Jack glanced around at him, he noticed that the man was dressed in a thick red coat with a furry lining. \_That explains why the cold doesn't bother him.\_

"Soâ€|" Jack began carefully, his long white fingers tracing patterns in the snow by his side. He watched what his hands were doing instead of watching North; he traced a little 'J' for his name. "So, thisâ€|this Final Duel thingâ€|it has to be done, then?"

North frowned. "It doesn't have to be. The world would be better off with a little less war, after all."

"No, butâ€|I mean, there is a way around it?" Jack hadn't thought of Hiccup for the whole day, which was an accomplishment for him. But the moment North had begun to explain the Final Duel, Jack's thoughts had shot off in the direction of his friend. He remembered Hiccup, his green eyes flicking guiltily down to Jack's burned arm, remembered him saying quietly, "I've already hurt you."

North hesitated. "It was stated once," he began carefully, "that there would be something that would lead both of you to no choice but the Duel. But that hasn't been said for a very long time, and I'm sure people have forgotten about it. It won't come to pass."

Jack remembered being trapped in Hiccup's inferno, struggling for breath, gasping for air, just wanting out. He remembered his own horrified countenance at Hiccup's idea, telling him to just let things be and let them go.

And then he closed his eyes against those thoughts, hoping North wouldn't say anything more. He didn't want to think any more about that Duel. And then a thought occurred to him and before he could question his own insensitivity, he'd blurted it out without thinking. "Did spring and autumn ever have to do this?"

North's blue eyes darkened again. They always did when he thought about the two elementals. "No. It was only meant for summer and winter, although spring was naturally meant to side with summer and autumn to side with you."

"And if we're so dangerousâ€|" Jack continued quietly, staring down at his hands, thinking about the ice that could come shooting out if only he willed it, "if we're so dangerous, then why didn't they just kill us like they killed the others?"

"You can't kill an elemental," North replied softly. "Not withoutâ€|terrible consequences."

"Oh." Jack didn't enjoy North's vague explanation, and he wanted to know more, but he had the feeling he'd overstepped North's boundaries with those last two questions. And he couldn't have the man get upset and leave him, because he still needed answers to his other

questions, too.

Noticing Jack's confusion, the man sighed, adjusted his woolen cap upon his white hair and explained, "Spring was murdered personally, after only a few years of training." his eyes saddened. "The person who killed her awoke the next morning and found he had power over the trees, the birds, the flowers. The moment he'd done the deed, he'd gained the powers over spring instead. It's an elemental's last defense mechanism, to pass their power to the person who harms them. It's one's last resort."

Jack's blue eyes were growing wider by the second. "So, if somebody killed me, my power would just transfer straight to them?"

North nodded silently.

Jack stared at the snowy ground for a second, lost in his own thoughts. He had an odd feeling about learning all of this without Hiccup by his side. A sinking feeling that it was wrong, almost, that Hiccup should be here, that Hiccup should be learning this with him. Why though? he questioned himself.

"What about autumn?" he asked. "And what about me? Don't you think they'll have found a way around that mechanism? If it was a suicide, maybe"

North shook his head. "It doesn't work like that. They tried something like that with autumn, and it didn't work."

Jack looked down at the snow on the ground, covering the grass in a thin blanket of white. "What do you mean?" His head was beginning to pound with how much new information it now held and with how much information he knew there was still out there to discover.

"The defense mechanism is still active, no matter who the elemental's killer is," North explained.

"Meaning?"

"Meaning even if the elemental chose suicide and many people with these powers do; they see it as an alternative to being locked away, and a chance to go out on their own terms their power would still pass on."

"But nobody's killed them." Jack replied. "They did it to themselves."

North shook his head. "The power transfers automatically to the people who killed them. And, unlike a murder, a suicide normally involves a lot more people. Hundreds of people wandering around with the power of winter at their fingertips literally. Almost everybody you've come in contact with in your life gets a bit of your power. And the people you're closest to, they get the most."

Jack's head began to pound again. "Wait a second," he murmured. He probably needed more than a second to take this all in, but North was patient. They sat there for ten long minutes in silence, Jack trying to piece everything together in his mind. He reached down and grabbed up a small handful of snow, staring at it. He couldn't imagine dying

and knowing his power was going to go to someone else.

It was funny â€" he had never been fond of his power, had in fact, been scared of his power for the better part of his life. He had never wanted to be like this, never dreamed of being a freak. But suddenly, as he thought about the alternatives, he couldn't imagine life without his powers, or worse, no life at all. It would feel like a part of him had been ripped away. How strange that the part of him he had once hated and feared now was the one part he couldn't imagine life without them.

He looked down at his pale hands for a long second; the palms now seemed to have a strangely blue tint that reminded him of his ice. "Soâ€¦you train people, then? You'd train me?"

He felt an odd urge to run to Hiccup, to find him, wherever he might have been, and tell him all about the mysterious trainer, explain to him about spring and autumn andâ€¦his thoughts came to a screeching halt as he remembered. The Final Duel, the prophecy North could not repeat to him, the battle between fire and ice that had been destined to happen since forever. They could ignore the prophecy, couldn't they? Hiccup had made a lot ofâ€¦ Jack hesitated as he tried to think of the right word. Mistakes. Hiccup had made a lot of mistakes lately, a lot of bad decisions, but that didn't mean that Jack had to listen to some prophecy, right? He remembered hearing somewhere, maybe from a conversation between two guards outside his cellâ€¦he remembered hearing from them that prophecies were fulfilled by the choices people make, not by destiny or fate.

He wanted to find Hiccup and tell him all about North, and convince the boy to come back and train with him, and then the prophecy would never have to come true at all.

In fact, they could ignore it entirely, training side-by-side. And so lost in thought was he that he didn't even notice North saying, "That's what I'm here for, isn't it?"

"What?"

"That's what I'm here for," North repeated gently, which made Jack trust him just a bit more. Their captors had never liked repeating themselves, he remembered with a slight shudder. "To train you. And if you want, I will."

## 11. Chapter 11

\*\*A/N: Okay, so I'm doing this thing where this week I just update every fic I'm currently working on. So I start with this one, and I go by alphabet, so the next one is Break of Dawn. I don't really know how much I like this chapter because it just feels sorta random. Anyway, if you're into any of my other fics, I'll update it this week! If you like Break of Dawn, chapter 3 will be up soon! \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Things were not going very well for the king of summer.<p>

For one, he had decided that, although he had wiped out this village and was therefore safe from detection while he was here, there was

also nothing left to burn. His fire didn't seem to like the wasteland it had created and, though Hiccup would have liked to stay, he knew he had to leave. He left his fire palace standing in the clearing and, since he had no possessions it wasn't like he had to pack up. He simply moved on, traveling to other places, looking for a new, temporary place to settle.

It was there that Hiccup knew, however careful he had been, people had heard of him anyway. He was there in that forest for two days, and, upon waking up on the second day, he thought he could spy people lurking in the trees, watching him. Sitting up on his hands and knees, he peered deep into the woods, squinting blindly around. Whispers filled the air.

"Hello?" he called cautiously, rising to his feet. The whispers died as quickly as they had begun.

There was a few seconds of silence and thenâ€¦

"Get him!"

People flew from all sides, coming at him, hands gripping his arms, strong arms gripping his ankles. He kicked and punched for a few seconds, feeling completely and stupidly helpless before he heard a strange kind of roar.

\_Duh. \_

Summoning the power under pressure proved to be much harder than Hiccup thought, but he managed to create a few flames from his fingertips.

Instinctively, a few of the people grabbing him released him just as quickly, stepping back, staring in awe. "It's just like the rumors said," breathed one.

In the bright glow of the crackling flame suspended above his palm, Hiccup could see that it was just a group of teenage boys, about six or seven of them, all about seventeen years old.

Although he controlled fire and not winter, his glare was cold as ice. "Vacate the premises immediately. And don't ever come back."

As they crouched in front of him, staring in awe at the flame, he actually thought they were going to listen to him. Until one of them gave a nasty, mocking laugh. "\_Vacate the premises\_!" he mimicked in a high falsetto. He shoved Hiccup easily to the ground; despite his power over an element, the boy was still light and weak from years of mistreatment.

"Listen, kid, we want some of that power," growled the kid who had just spoken, giving what Hiccup guessed was meant to be an intimidating glare. "So we want to know how you got it?"

"Gotâ€¦\_got\_ it?" Hiccup couldn't resist a laugh at their stupidity, trying to rise to his feet again. The boy made as if to shove him back down, but Hiccup strengthened the fire in his hand, making the other boy rethink a bit. "I didn't get it. But \_you\_ better \_get out\_."

"What happened to you, then?" the boy demanded. "Did you get dropped on your head as a kid or what?"

Hiccup snapped. The flames roared suddenly behind them, and the boys turned around to see the source of the noise. One screamed when he saw the wall of fire rearing up, but none of them moved, staring like terrified rabbits, frozen to the spot.

Hiccup was about to drop his hands, let the fire engulf them and then—then he stopped. Something told him to hold off. They were just kids, after all. Stupid, mean, clueless teenagers who had no idea what they were asking about, but just kids. He waited until they'd broken out of their trance and were running as fast as they could away from the spot before letting the fire rage once more. As it engulfed everything—trees, grass, bush—he began to run from the spot, listening to the kids scream as they watched it tear apart the forest.

Clearly, it was time to move on.

But the same thing happened, happened in the next three places Hiccup went. Always, there were curious kids poking their noses in his business, asking how he'd gotten his powers, asking him about his life. Sometimes, the kids really didn't mean any harm; they looked up at him with awe and respect, begging him to teach them the way to control fire. Much as he hated to admit it, Hiccup actually found himself liking those kids, the nicer ones. He told them the truth, of course, that he had no idea how to teach them, and then he made them swear not to tell.

But always, they told. Little kids were no good at keeping secrets, he realized with bitter surprise. He fled those places when the adults tried to storm his hide-outs to lock him away again or to find him, experiment on him, kill him—whatever their plans for him, he was sure they were gruesome and terrifying.

The fourth place he settled in wasn't any different. A cute little blonde thing, no more than five or six, with huge, hopeful green eyes. "How'd you do that, mister, how'd you do that?"

"Didn't your mother ever teach you not to talk to strangers?" Hiccup demanded, shoving his hands behind his back. Hey, it might work with these kids. Out of sight, out of mind, right?

"No." The girl shook her head solemnly. "My mommy's dead."

"Oh." To hear her state it so boldly was a shock. So he searched for something else to say. 'I'm sorry' didn't have a ring of honesty to it, so what came tumbling out was probably something even worse. "If it helps, I think mine is, too."

"Why don't you know?" she questioned.

"I never knew her," he responded, overcome with the irrational urge to show her the meaning of stranger danger. But he controlled himself. No use to go around scaring little kids for the heck of it. That was what Halloween was for. "Now, you really shouldn't be talking to strangers, so—" he gave a light shooing motion with his hands.



She pouted. "But you didn't tell me how you did that!"

"Umâ€|" he looked down at his hands. "Iâ€|I don't knowâ€|I just kind ofâ€|moved my hands, I guess?"

"Will you show me how?" She crawled up onto a nearby rock, scooting as close as she could in order to get a better look at Hiccup's face. "I've never seen anybody else make fire with their hands before!"

"Uhâ€|" Hiccup hesitated. "Iâ€|I don't think you \_can\_ do it."

"Oh, everybody says that," she complained. "They all say, 'oh, no, Abby, you can't do it! You can't possibly know how!' but I can, I can, I can, I really can! So please, please, please help me learn!" She gazed up at him with wide, hopeful eyes.

The irony of somebody who had never known what a curse it was.

## 12. Chapter 12

\*\*A/N: Er...it's clear I owe you guys a big apology, huh? It's just I don't know, I just...ugh... ;-; Idk. But I finally recovered and here is a superlong chapter to make up for it. Pleaseeee don't tell me I've lost any readers D: \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Jack knew he shouldn't have gone this far south in search of his friend; he was coughing and spluttering and choking from the thick smoke covering the land, and still there was no sign of Hiccup anywhere.<p>

Things that had once been proud wooden huts had been reduced to blackened, burnt cinders and ashes, and the grass was dead and brown, crunching under Jack's feet. He couldn't see the sky through the smoke, and there wasn't a person to be seen. Or an animal, for that matter. Hiccup had chased all life away from this spot.

"It doesn't matter." These were the words Jack had been repeating to himself every time he ran across a burned and destroyed village, a ransacked home, a pile of ashes where once a forest had stood. And he repeated them now, trying to convince himself of their truth. He had to find Hiccup, and tell him everything. He was going to bring his best and only friend back to train alongside him with North. And Hiccup would want it. Surely he didn't enjoy this killing, this burningâ€|did he?

Jack's confidence wavered as he used a shoot of ice to propel him forward suddenly, away from the destroyed, dead village. What if the Final Duel and the prophecy was destined to come true? What if he didn't really have a say in the matter, and neither did Hiccup? What if Hiccup just yelled at him and screamed at him and burned him all over again, and told him to stay away forever, no matter how much the winter boy tried to plead with his fiery friend about North? What if Hiccup unwittingly fulfilled the prophecy, the prophecy that he had no idea even existed?

Jack pushed the thoughts away like the strands of white hair that he pushed out of his eyes. He was not going to think like that, he just wasn't. There was so much in this kind of situation that could go wrong, but he wasn't going to think like that. He could turn things terribly wrong by going to see Hiccup, but maybe, just maybe, instead, he could set everything right again, the way it was supposed to be.

\* \* \*

><p>The rage was building again.<p>

And Hiccup needed to burn something, but gods, what was there left to burn? He had torn down every tree, killed every blade of grass, set fire to every person in the area. Even the wooden and straw huts they had built had eventually been burned to the ground, shortly after they'd fled, screaming about fire demons as they went. His fists clenched, his fiery yellow cloak sweeping the ground behind him. He paced frantically back and forth. Everything about him was made of fire; he couldn't burn himself, could he?

Stopping short at the thought, he rolled up his sleeves, putting his left hand, his dominant one, upon his right wrist and summoning the power. The flames sprung from his palm, but no pain followed, and no relief. He wasn't truly burning anything. He scowled, letting his hands drop back by his sides before a welcome sound came: footsteps.

Who was stupid enough to endanger their safety? he wondered to himself, scrambling out, onto the balcony of his fire palace, where he had once again retreated. By now, both animal and human were smart enough to dread the fiery emblem upon his doors, upon his cloak. They had learned to stay away. But this someone had not.

He opened the doors, striding confidently out, hoping it was someone or something that he could take his time on, kill slowly. He could have moved north for more things to burn, but that land was rumored to be coated in early snow and ice, and he didn't want to risk running into Jack there. He didn't know if he could face another confrontation with the boy.

But then he saw who approached his door.

The soft glow of the white hair had not been dulled by the soot floating on the breeze, the blue eyes sparkling in the pale face had not stopped twinkling since Hiccup had last seen him. He flew back with a gasp, the smell of winter filling his nose.

"No!" he breathed, stumbling back.

And harder to bear was the fact that he wanted this. He wanted Jack to enter, wanted it so badly. He wanted to grab the boy and burn him, wanted to kill him slowly with his fire. The urge to burn kept threatening to take over his mind, his emotions, but with this, he couldn't let them.

"No." He swept back into the palace, running down several staircases made of fire, literally fire, and coming upon the doors with his symbol still upon them. He bolted them shut, panting heavily as though it had taken unbelievable exertion, but he knew that wasn't

the case. The problem was not running. The problem was  
\_resisting\_.

The inevitable knock upon the door reached Hiccup's ears, and he heard Jack on the other side draw away with a gasp of pain and an 'Ow'.

\_I've hurt him, \_Hiccup thought miserably to himself. \_I've hurt him already, despite the fact that I tried not to.\_

He squeezed his eyes shut, listening to Jack knocking again. Again a slight hiss of pain, but the boy on the other side of the door didn't sound nearly as surprised the second time. Hiccup knew he would keep knocking, keep burning himself if he had to, so he closed his eyes even tighter and called, "Go away!"

"Hiccup, please come out." Jack sounded frustrated and upset. "I just want to talk. No tricks or anything, no accusations."

Hiccup sighed. "You need to go. You don't need to talk to me right now."

"Hiccup, please." Jack sounded angrier now, and a little desperate. "Tell me I didn't come all this way for nothing."

More guilt rushed towards Hiccup, and he pulled his knees up to his chest, burying his head in his knees. He didn't want to let Jack in. He did. He wanted to let Jack in, but he didn't want to, because he knew he wouldn't be able to control himself. He would burn the winter boy without a second thought. He couldn't control it, and the thought scared him, making his palms grow hot and red.

\_I can't let you in, Jack. Don't make me let you come in.\_

"Hiccup?" The boy pressed softly.

Hiccup closed his eyes again with a small groan. He could control himself for two minutes, couldn't he? Long enough to ensure that Jack got what he wanted, but too short a space of time for him to be completely overwhelmed by the urge to burn. He gazed down at his hands and slowly stood, unbolting the door, opening it carefully. He was terrified that the very sight of his friend would make resisting all the harder.

Jack stood on the other side, still dressed in his raggedy clothes from the cell and he looked tired and worn, but also rather pleased with himself. "Oh, good, you're out."

"Hello." Hiccup didn't trust himself to speak past this.

"I need to talk to you, there's something you need to know."

Hiccup raised his eyebrows slowly. "Then go on, and please make it quick, I shouldn't be out here too long."

\_Burn him. Please burn him. Oh, he's so beautifully alive, look, he's got a beating heart and everything. And he's the embodiment of WINTER. A little fire won't harm him, not in the slightest\_

Hiccup clenched his hands into fists, struggling just to breathe. He averted his gaze to the dry, dead grass on the ground.

"You're acting kind of odd," Jack said concernedly, regarding him in worry. "Are you okay?"

"What you wanted to say, please, Jack," Hiccup urged, terrified that the need to burn would overcome his affection for his friend.

Jack drew back slightly, looking just a little hurt. "Look, I know we ended on bad terms last time, but I really wanted to talk to you, and just let you know some things that you have a right to know, and tell you"

"No, I can't do this, I'm sorry." Hiccup turned to go back in his palace, but Jack grabbed his sleeve.

And it was all downhill from there.

Everything, every nerve ending in Hiccup's body screamed when Jack's skin met his, and his brain knew nothing except one word: burn.

The fire shot out of his palms, filling the dead, dry landscape around them, eating away at the only living soul besides himself. Jack released Hiccup's sleeve with a cry, falling backwards onto the ground.

And Hiccup knew he had to stop, knew he should stop because this was wrong, this was Jack, his best friend, his almost-brother whom he was burning, but gods, it felt so great to have something alive to feed upon again.

The fire raged in his soul, alive and real around him, giving him the most wonderful high. Pale skin turned bright pink and red the moment the fire met the skin, tearing the clothing to rags once more.

Jack finally drew back, wrenching himself free from Hiccup's grasp. For a single moment, Hiccup stared at his friend, still seeing him as nothing more than fuel, kindling for the fire. And then he blinked and the image was gone, and there was Jack, standing forlorn and shaking, clutching at his arms and shoulders with great moans of pain.

Hiccup stepped quickly away, a hand going over his mouth. "No. No. I didn't I didn't mean" His voice faded into silence, and he found he was too shamed to speak. What kind of words could ever make up for what he had done?

And Jack, his best friend, was constructing a shield of ice behind which he crouched, staring at Hiccup with a kind of quiet intensity. But he didn't look afraid. He looked resigned. As if he had expected this.

"I was wrong." Jack's voice was quiet, but it seemed to Hiccup like he was shouting in the sudden stillness and silence. "I came all this way because I told myself that you were a good person deep down, really, really deep down. I told myself that you would never hurt me, that all those rumors in the south of a fire demon, a monster living within the forests and taking down every village I told myself that

that's all they were. I was wrong. You really are a monster, aren't you?"

And then Jack was gone, the ice shield reflecting the different hues of Hiccup's raging fire back at him.

"I didn't mean it!" Hiccup yelled desperately after the retreating figure of his friend, and then he collapsed on his knees, throwing his fire at everything within range, melting the ice shield within moments, trying so desperately to turn the fire on himself. Still, he was not able to. Being made partly of fire, he couldn't be harmed by fire.

He slipped back into his palace, staring at Jack's distant figure, now a mere blur on the horizon's edge. "I tried," he whispered, hot tears stinging his eyes, threatening to cascade down his cheeks. "I tried to tell you to stay away!"

### 13. Chapter 13

**\*\*A/N: \*\*\*\*SURPRISE\*\***

**\*\*Yes, this is the surprise. Updating all of my eighteen in-progress fics at once. It was pretty crazy, but I did it, and it's here, and good day to you all! I had tons of fun doing this, so I hope you guys have tons of fun reading this!\*\***

**\*\*Okay, so, this chapter was pretty eventful, I guess, but next chapter, ooh, next chapter is just like a bucket of angst. A whole freaking bucket. Plus two. xD \*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>Hiccup couldn't rightly remember how he managed to get back inside his palace and bolt the door, but he came to himself on the warm lava floor, staring unseeingly up at the orange-yellow suns in the ceiling. The need to burn was gone now, but then, so was everything else.<p>

He might have controlled fire, but he felt strangely cold from the inside out, as if he had been standing in a blizzard for so long that the snow had spread its chill down to his very bones. He lay there on the floor, feeling the tears spilling down his cheeks but not caring, because nobody was there to see him and what did it matter anyway?

The numbness he felt then made him remember those awful periods in the cell with Hollow Jack, how the frost boy would just go away and completely ignore everything around him. At the time, Hiccup had been angry with Jack, for leaving him there in that cell all alone, but now he thought he understood. Sometimes, living in the present was just too painful, as it was right then.

And Jack thought he had done it on purpose. He, like everyone else, now believed Hiccup a monster.

The tears started again as the numbness threatened to slip away, self-hate all too ready to take his place.

"Iâ€|" Hiccup's voice was shaking as he opened his pale, shaking lips. "I'm a monster."

Saying the words aloud changed nothing; he was only speaking the truth.

But he didn't want to be a monster. He wanted to change. He didn't want to hurt people anymore. He didn't want to use his power. All those people, those people whose accusations had made him so angry in the beginningâ€|they were all right. He was a monster. He should never have started using his powers if all it led to was this.

Hiccup's gut wrenched painfully, and he thought for a moment that it was from guilt and sadness, but then he rose up onto his knees and vomited onto the lava floor, shaking and shuddering with a cold that pierced his heart instead of his skin.

He rocked slowly backward and forward, shaking, his head buried in his hands as dark thoughts blazed unchecked through his mind. He was a monster. He was dangerous. Everybody should stay away from him. He should barricade himself within his fire palace, and pretend that nothing had ever happened, that he had never killed hundreds of people. Everyone else could resume their daily lives, while he stayed alone, trying to find a way to burn himself to death, or waiting until old age claimed him.

Or sickness, he reminded himself as he leaned heavily forward and retched again. It appeared his stomach was done expelling its contents, however, for he shivered and shook, but nothing came up. Hiccup knew he should have cleaned up the sick from the floor, but he didn't have the energy. For how long he remained there, he didn't know. He knew that a night or so must have passed, for moonlight filtered in through the windows after a bit, and then it slipped away again, into sunlight, which made Hiccup's eyes water, and then back into dim starlight.

Hiccup did not eat or drink as he sat there, but eventually he registered tiredness, and, exhausted, he lay down and slept once more, but in dreams, there was fire and ice colliding again and again, and people screaming at him. One word, over and over again. \_"MONSTER! MONSTER! MONSTER!"\_

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup jerked awake, very late into the night, and for a moment he wasn't sure what had roused him, until he felt an icy night breeze hitting his face, blowing his hair back and making him shudder with cold. He considered the merits of going back to sleep, but he could hear hushed voices from a little ways away, and he rose up on his knees, preparing to rise unsteadily to his feet. Somebody must have broken into his palace again. Many people around here did, though inexpertly. Mostly teenage boys who fancied themselves heroes and thought they were going to be the ones to stop Hiccup's fiery reign of terror.<p>

When was it going to occur to these boys, Hiccup wondered rather grumpily, as he walked carefully towards the voices, and the cold breeze, that he controlled a whole element? The heat in the air on a summer's day â€" he could control that, too. They would have no

chance against himâ€|on a regular day.

But this time, this time there was to be no burning. This time, he was not going hurt anyone for his own gain, for his own protection. The need to burn was long gone, doused as though by a heavy downpour.

He came upon the group, oddly tall for teenagers, not that it mattered, and he spoke, resisting the urge to light a fire in his palm to penetrate the pressing darkness from the moonless night. "Come into the light, please," he called softly.

There was an outbreak of outraged hissing.

"You woke him, you nimrods!" But it wasn't a boy; it was the gruff growl of a grown man.

"It's alright!" Hiccup stepped into the circle, brushing by a few of the boys on his way in. Except they weren't boys, none of them. These weren't the regular, silly teenagers Hiccup usually had to deal with; they were hulking Viking men, and currently all of them were staring down at him in a furious way.

He backed quickly out of the circle again, stumbling over his own feet. He could have killed them. He could have shot the flames out of his fingertips and made an end of these men, right here and right now. But, as if to underline his new determination to quit hurting people, he mumbled, mostly to himself, "I'm not going to hurt you."

"You? Hurt us?" One of the men, who, by the smell on him had had an awful lot of mead before coming here, seemed to find this extremely funny. "We aren't scared of you, Desert Brain!"

"Desert Brain?" Hiccup repeated in confusion, his brows knitting. "That one was kind of lame. How about Flame Head? I don't control deserts, remember, I just control heat, soâ€"WHOA, PUT ME DOWN!"

For the man had suddenly picked him up by the collar, holding him off the ground and clapping a dirty palm over his mouth.

Hiccup fought to get out of the rough iron grip, but before he could move more than a few inches in either direction, there was a great crash of metal on bone, and his world spun dizzily before darkness overtook him.

## 14. Chapter 14

\*\*A/N: Okay, I lied. Hiccup's part is not that angsty. But holy crap, Jack wow xD he's really bad xD\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>North did not object to teaching Jack, but he refused to start that very day, when the winter elemental returned, wild-eyed, furious-looking, and with part of his sleeve burned off and blackened. This was both a blessing and a curse, Jack realized, because although his powers were impaired slightly due to injury from his natural opposite and thus, he would not be up to his full

standard while the burn remained on his skin, he also knew he needed a distraction from what had happened.<p>

He had expected Hiccup to burn him, he had expected the other boy to be angry, but it didn't make the facts any easier to accept. When his friend had burned him, he had looked elated. He had been happy about it. He had burned his once best friend with no regret in his eyes.

They had gone their separate ways lately, but Jack had childishly clung to the belief that deep down, Hiccup cared about him. It was one of the only things that had made it bearable, to think about his best friend burning down the village, to think about Hiccup trapping him in an inferno. He hadn't meant to, he had gotten carried away, he was angry only with the villageâ€|

But somewhere along the way, all of Jack's excuses had run out. And now, here he was, examining the raw, pink skin on his arm, rubbing his other hand along it, despite the pain. Because physical pain was preferable to the aching and throbbing of his wounded heart.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup awoke with a pounding headache, his whole body aching and a strange clinking noise following his every movement. His mouth was dry, and he swallowed, struggling to remember where he was, what he had been doing. His arms were sore and aching, much more than the rest of his body. In that instant, Hiccup shifted slightly, heard a strange clinking noise, realized his arms were pressed behind his back, and a terrible fear entered his heart.<p>

He had spent fourteen years of his life in chains, and he knew the sound shackles made when they moved. It was the sound of restraint. Hiccup's breathing hitched, his heartbeat sped up as he began struggling to pull the handcuffs off. However, his arms were trembling horribly, and he didn't have the strength to free himself. He briefly considered using his power for the job, before the thought was immediately banished. He was not going to use his power, not after what happened the last time.

As soon as this thought occurred, the door at the other end of the room opened, spilling golden light, too bright for Hiccup's eyes. His green eyes watered when he looked at the light, but a tall, broad-shouldered figure blocked his view anyway, kneeling down next to him in the dark cell.

"So," the figure whispered, his deep voice stirring something in Hiccup's memory. One of the men who had broken into his palace. "This is the little fire demon. Not so scary when you can't use your powers, are you?"

Hiccup wasn't entirely sure what to say back, so he said nothing at all, merely looked at him.

"Now," the man stood from his spot beside the boy, pacing up and down in front of him instead. "How did you get this power?"

"Oh!" Hiccup had not expected this, but looking back, it seemed obvious. Of course that's why they had kidnapped him. Not to stop him, but to get his power for themselves. He hesitated for a moment



on the verge of a lie. He could send them on a wild goose chase if he wanted, buy himself some more time, but his eyes fell to the shackles encasing his hands. It didn't matter anymore. Everything he'd cared about was gone. Did it really matter if he died?

"I was born with them," he whispered, so quietly that for a moment he felt sure that the man had not heard him.

"You seem very uncertain of that," the man hissed, his face inches from the boy's once more.

Hiccup instinctively wrinkled his nose as the sickening scent of alcohol overwhelmed him. "What reason would I have to lie? I have nothing more to lose, so I don't care if you kill me, and I don't mean to be rude, but I'm really not afraid of you."

The man dealt him a fierce blow on the side of the head, and, without thinking, Hiccup let out a cry of pain, struggling to reach up, to feel if there was a bump. When the chains stopped him, he slowly let his hands drop again, back behind his back.

"If you don't cooperate, we'll do things the hard way," the man sneered at him. "But you're a pretty little thing, and it'd be such a shame to have to change that."

Hiccup tried to feel something to appease the man in front of him, but there was no fear left. Every emotion, it seemed, had fled along with Jack. This time, he was the hollow one, the one who wasn't living in the present, wasn't feeling. But he didn't mind very much. He could not summon the energy to care about what they were going to do to him. Were they going to break his bones now before they killed him? He hoped not, but he would not expect them to go easy on him; in the last cell he had found himself in, they had not gone easy on him.

"I'm sorry," he replied simply, "but I really can't tell you anything about my powers. I was born with them, I think, because I don't remember a time when I didn't have them."

"We'll find a way to make you talk," the man said, after a long silence. "What you have doesn't just happen to people, you know."

"I wish it didn't." For the first time, Hiccup latched onto an emotion: bitterness colored his tone.

The man rose to his feet, heading for the door, which was still swinging open. "We'll come back for you when you're ready to talk."

## 15. Chapter 15

\*\*A/N: Here's some nice angst :D and there shall be MUCH more to come! :D\*\*

\*\*DarkHorseBlueSky - A burn on the tongue is helped by cold water xD do not drink orange juice, it just hurts, and the doctor isn't necessary. Just soak it in cold water and you'll be fine xD I can't tell you how many times I've burned my tongue on chicken pot pies xD \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>It became clear after a little while that the man who had left really meant what he said. Nobody came for Hiccup. Not when his stomach started to growl from hunger, or his throat began to burn from thirst. Not when his limbs began to ache from staying in one position for too long, and not even when night fell outside his barred window. He knew, in the back of his mind, that he ought to have melted the shackles like butter, burned off the window and climbed out, escaped, but he felt strangely disconnected from everything. Was this how Jack felt in those times when he had simply gone away somewhere? Had Hiccup been selfish for getting angry with him, for trying to force him to live in the present?<p>

Jack.

Just the name made Hiccup's eyes sting with tears that he didn't even have the incentive to shed. If this was what the rest of his life was going to be like, why should he even bother? It was good that he was hungry. Maybe it was better if he didn't eat, if he just let himself die. What did he have to live for anymore? The idea of spending another minute on this earth, all alone in a cell and thinking of Jack and trying to force himself back into numbness, because not feeling was the preferable alternative to this awful pain— The very idea was enough to make fresh tears build up in his eyes. But not enough to make them fall down his cheeks.

He squeezed his eyes shut, hoping this would at least temporarily delay the tears. Now that feeling was coming back to him, he expected the fear to start. He expected to feel panic, because he was kidnapped and alone and nobody knew where he was and what were they going to do to him, he wondered. But this was not enough. What did it matter if he died anymore? Let them come back in here, and let them kick him around and bury him in snowdrifts and beat or whip him until he was sobbing from the pain. Death was coming for him, he could feel it. And if there was one thing he was certain of, it was that he did not deserve a peaceful death.

\* \* \*

><p>It was an uncomfortable night, physically speaking. Hiccup was chained securely to the wall, and even though he could have melted the handcuffs easily, he refused to use his powers for another thing, ever again. For he could see now that the village that had imprisoned him had been right to do so. He was dangerous. He was a monster. There was still hope for Jack. Ice and snow did not hurt people: it triggered snowball fights, and people built snowmen and they had fun in wintertime. But they fled before fire. He was a monster. He scared people. And, at another time in his life, he would have positively enjoyed this thought.<p>

He closed his eyes against the pain of those thoughts, his eyelids red from the sunlight streaming in through the barred window, illuminating his depressing, dirty cell. His eyes ached from lack of sleep. He wasn't even sure when he had last slept. Everything seemed hazy to him now, and he couldn't grasp onto anything. The only thing that seemed clear to him was that he was a monster who hurt his friends and utterly destroyed his enemies. He had taken innocent lives and burned down homes, with children and mothers and fathers

still inside. People who had needed someone. People who were needed by somebody else.

He was not needed. It wasn't a selfish desire to wish for death to him; nobody would miss him when he was gone. And hard as he tried, Hiccup couldn't feel fear or distaste for his captors; all he felt was a kind of misplaced pity. They wanted the power he had over fire, but they had no idea what they were asking for. They could not possibly understand that the strange ability would lead to a life in chains, to being hunted wherever you went, to hurting your friends and never having a family and spending your life running from people because all they wanted was to hurt you, to spend your life fleeing from accusations that you were a monsterâ€¦

Hiccup wasn't sure when the creaking of the metal door of his cell interrupted his thoughts of self-loathing, but he found himself again still sitting in the cell, and with a different man standing across from him this time. In his hands was a tray of food. Hiccup's stomach lurched when the smell hit him, but he felt no desire for whatever was on the tray. No matter what they tried to do, he would not eat it. \_He would not eat it\_. He was going to die. He was not going to fight death, but he prayed that he would leave the world slowly and painfully. Maybe if he suffered enough, it would atone for all his wrongs. Of course, it would take a lot of pain for that, and he was going to hell, anyway. There was no heaven for a beast like him, only pain and eternal torment.

"Hello, fire demon." This man was different from the first. His voice was cold, but not cold in the way that Jack's pale hands sometimes were; it wasn't the kind of cold that winter had ever made Hiccup experience, but it was so strong and intense that it made him shiver, right there in the cell. For the first time since Jack had run from him, he felt the tiniest pinprick of fear. Whoever this man was, he had seen and done horrible things. And he did not regret them.

But then, Hiccup had literally nothing left to lose. His life, the only thing he was still clinging toâ€¦well, it would be merciful when he died.

"Are you ready to talk yet?" The man walked farther into the room, dropping the tray down in front of Hiccup and kneeling down next to him.

The king of summer swallowed, his heart ticking faster than a frantic clock, and tried his hardest not to pull away. The smell of the food overwhelmed him, and his stomach betrayed him, growling.

"Are you hungry?"

Hiccup slowly shook his head, not yet trusting himself to speak.

"Good, because you're not getting any food until you tell us how you got those sweet little powers of yours."

"I don't even know how I got them!" Hiccup shouted, exasperated, forgetting his fear. "I don't know what else you want me to say! I was born with them, and that's all I know!"

The man scrutinized him for a long second, as if trying to tell

whether he was lying or not. Hiccup swallowed again, not out of fear that he would not believe him, but because he didn't like how close his captor was getting. He tried to inch away from the man, but this was close to impossible, as he was chained securely to the wall.

"You'll talk," the man promised, rising to his feet again. "You'll talk."

A sudden, familiar emotion sparked in Hiccup's chest: anger, smothering the fear and springing to life, igniting in his chest like fire. "You keep saying that, but I don't think you get it: I don't care what you do to me anymore."

"Is that so?" The man turned suddenly to face him, an amused, cruel smile playing on his lips. "In that caseâ€¦"

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup clenched his hands into fists, feeling sweat beading on his forehead. His back felt like it was splitting open, and still the whip did not stop descending upon him. This man was not simply trying to abuse information out of him; he was enjoying it, and every lash spoke of his viciousness. And there was no Jack right around the corner this time, no ice upon the walls for him to numb his back.<p>

Tears welled up in his eyes as he thought of this, and he became aware that the whip was no longer upon his skin, or whistling through the air towards him. The man was kneeling down next to him, staring almost hungrily at him as he cried.

"You'll talk," his captor said quietly. "You'll talk."

## 16. Chapter 16

\*\*A/N: Sorry about all the narration, but considering Hiccup and Jack are both alone at the moment, I really didn't see a way to change that..\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Training with North was a challenge. It always was. Jack's powers came easily to him, but his mind was elsewhere from their first training session, and North started to get annoyed.<p>

This, of course, complicated things even more, because Jack was afraid of angry people, and so for a time, North suggested it might be better if they took a break. Jack guiltily accepted the offer, but cutting out training sessions completely was a mistake, because then he had way too much time to think about Hiccup. And thinking about Hiccup made him think about the healing burns still littering his upper arms. He ran the burns under cold water, and was actually preparing to ice them when North swooped down and told him on no account was he to do that, because ice only made burns worse.

Jack went back to the cold water, and he went back to thinking about Hiccup. He had tried so hard not to give up on him, told himself that the fire boy hadn't really meant to hurt him, that he'd been the one

to run away, that Hiccup hadn't made him or anything. The excuses he'd made for his friend's actions stretched so long at one point that he couldn't remember a time when he hadn't had to make excuses for him. It had seemed like such a long time ago that they had escaped from the cell. Such a long time since they had been friends, plain and simple. Helping each other to sleep or trying to ease the other's pain, trying to find reasons to laugh so they wouldn't cry. Jack couldn't say he missed his life in the cell, but he missed Hiccup, more than anything. The only friendship he'd ever made was nothing but memories anymore.

\* \* \*

><p>It continued this way for many days. Hiccup did not know how long it lasted. He did not know when these people would realize that he truly had no idea what to do, how to help them. If he knew how, he would give them his powers in a second. He would rather be stripped of the only constant in his life than have to live this way, in constant fear of hurting people.<p>

Because he\_ was\_ afraid of that. He didn't want to hurt his captors, whatever they did to him. He didn't want one more person to know that he was a monster.

They threatened to kill him if he didn't reveal his secret, and his answer was always the same: \_"Please do so, death would be merciful."

—

This made them angry, but he was only being honest. Death would be merciful compared to the life he was living. He truly didn't want to live anymore. What was the point of existing, the point of breathing, if you were all alone?

He was miserable, but at the same time, he could not cry. His eyes did not produce a single tear after the first whipping. Possibly he had cried himself out. Possibly he could not bring himself to care about his fate when it was clear he was doomed. He'd had the chance to turn his back on his past, forgive and forget, but he'd chosen to go a different route, a darker route. He'd hurt Jack in his quest for revenge and blood, and then he'd hurt him again because he couldn't control himself. He'd hurt Jack and disagreed with him and led him wrongly, and yet Jack had still chosen to believe in him, chosen not to give up on him. And Hiccup had blown it. He'd burned him, all because he couldn't control himself. He'd shattered the fragile trust and love Jack had built up in his friend, all because he was too stupid and big-headed to see past his own feelings. He'd destroyed the only friendship he'd ever made; there was no reason for him to keep living anymore. He'd told himself that Jack had chosen a different path, and that he would get over Jack abandoning him, but the truth was, life was pointless without someone to share it with.

He'd thought he was happy when he was burning people, killing them and destroying their homes. He'd thought he was happy when people flinched upon seeing him, or expressed fear upon hearing his name, seeing his fiery emblem. He was wrong. He didn't want people to be afraid of him, didn't like it. He didn't enjoy burning or killing. He didn't even care about his freedom anymore. He would die in these chains, and he couldn't bring himself to regret his fate. He wished he could have lived life differently, but he deserved whatever was

coming for him.

The door opened.

Hiccup tried to sit up a little straighter, look a little tenser. He learned that his captors were not happy when he appeared completely relaxed "they wanted him to be scared. To be fair, he had tried to be scared. He had tried to please them, and dredge up a bit of fear, but, as he'd said, his life was pointless now, so ending it would be merciful.

The man who'd entered knelt down next to him, putting a hand under his chin. "I've found your secret, little fire demon."

## 17. Chapter 17

\*\*A/N: Such an eventful chapter, and Hiccup changes emotion so fast in it that it's really quite alarming xD Still, I like it. The chapter, I mean. I hope you guys do, too. Please review! I meant to update sooner, but...you know...life :P\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup did not know how long he'd gone without seeing the sun. It was warm on his face, pure golden rays beaming down from the sky to shine upon him, and the warmth felt wonderful. He soaked it in gratefully. He never wanted to be away from the sun for that long again.<p>

The man dragging him did not have the same feelings, it seemed, for he roughly wound Hiccup's chains around a wooden stake embedded deeply in the dying grass, walking swiftly forward so he stood in front of the exhausted boy. He forced Hiccup's chin upward as far as it would go, speaking in that same low, sneering voice that Hiccup hated. "You see, little fire demon? We've figured you out. And now we're going to kill you." Only anger colored his tone. Fierce anger and a cold, calculating smoothness. Hiccup couldn't resist a small shudder. Whatever this man had planned, it wasn't good.

There was a rushing sound somewhere to his left and glancing around, he realized it was a river, endlessly producing water.

"Whatâ€¦" he swallowed, his dry mouth making it hard to speak. "What are you going to do to me?" He hoped the man hadn't heard the stutter of fear in his voice.

His captor smiled coldly down at him. "We're going to kill you, fire demon."

There was fear. Yes, there was a quick bolt of it, racing through him like an electric current, but it deserted him just as rapidly and, strangely enough, Hiccup found himself trying to call it back. He wanted to feel something. He was going to die, damn it, and he wanted to feel something about his own death.

Sharp voices yanked him out of his reverie, a few men shouting to the one that towered over him.

"Not starting early, are you, Rann?" One of them asked, with a

playful smirk, but the white-knuckled grip he maintained on the hilt of his knife betrayed the tension within him.

Rann, if that was indeed his name, stepped quickly away from Hiccup. His blood-red cloak swept the cold grass.

Hiccup lowered his hands, allowing the feeling of dirt crumbling beneath his skin to wash away all thought.

"No," Rann replied curtly from somewhere above the boy. "No, just waiting for all of you. As usual, you're late."

"Don't forget," the man with the knife brandished the weapon at Rann. "It has to be all at the same time, remember? And if any of you slip or accidentally let go, well, that's your fault. Cry yourself a river."

"Speaking of rivers, might we get on with it?" Rann cut in sharply. Hiccup could feel the man's hands digging into his shoulder, reluctant to release his prize. Sickened, the boy tried to shrug him off.

"Stop that." The man with the knife was instantly at Rann's side, cuffing Hiccup sharply round the head.

Hiccup mustered up the courage to glare at the man. He was dying, but he wasn't going to die without making this known first. "Don't touch me. I don't want you to touch me." After all, touching was the source of his problems with Jack right now.

The man with the knife barked out a short and almost entirely mirthless laugh. For a wild moment, Hiccup wondered if the man thought he was joking, but almost instantly, his unspoken question was answered by a sharp blow. His cheek stung, blazing ugly red with a new welt.

"Listen," the man said roughly, grabbing Hiccup by the collar and practically shaking him. "We can touch you all you want, you got that, kid? We don't give a shit what you want, and you're gonna put up with that. Got it?"

Hiccup bit his lip against the response he longed to throw at the man. He knew from his previous years in a cell, that having a sharp tongue was nothing to be proud of.

"That's right," the man gave a sickening chuckle when Hiccup raised no more protests, giving him a condescending pat on the head. Hiccup hated his touch. A fire sprang up within him at the pure arrogance of it.

"Careful, Tayne," Rann warned. "He's got a temper on him, and we haven't taken his power yet."

"Look at him," Tayne shrugged off the warnings with naught but a shrug. "He's completely powerless thanks to those shackles. He won't be hurting anyone ever again."

\_That's right, I won't, \_Hiccup raged silently to himself. \_But I made that decision, not you. \_

At least when he died, he'd die knowing he'd secured this one, small victory.

"Well, let's get to it, then!" One of the other men cried, waving his hands in the air exasperatedly. "What are we doing, waiting for the grass to grow?"

Tayne scowled, drawing his knife and already preparing to land a sharp blow, but Rann put a hand on the other's shoulder. "No," he spoke firmly, with the utmost authority. "Wait."

Tayne dropped his knife and fist. He waited. Hiccup watched the scene in bewilderment as they slowly tugged him closer to the river, until his chains were pulled taut and he was kneeling directly above the rushing water. Would it be cold? He was betting it would be. And what were they going to do? Were they going to throw him in the river, and wait until he drowned?

The anxious anticipation was unbearable.

But as soon as he thought this, Hiccup wished he hadn't. Because the instant this thought crossed his mind, the men gathered. They each picked a spot, so grimy hands were suddenly upon Hiccup's back and neck and the back of his head, resting there. Hiccup shuddered at the touches.

The hands were pushing him now, deeper and deeper, and the chains were creaking quietly in protest.

"No!" Hiccup suddenly understood what was happening, but he could do nothing as he was suddenly submerged in freezing cold water, rushing into his ears and eyes and up his nose, into his still open mouth.

Sudden, icy fear rendered him frozen. This was what they were going to do—hold him down until he—until he—

He did have feeling about his own death now. Now he was terrified, shaking, knowing tears were building up in his eyes even if he couldn't feel them due to the moisture from the river. He kept waiting for the black spots to appear in his vision, to at least black out from lack of oxygen, but before either of these things happened, rough hands drew him up again.

He was crying in earnest now, shaking and shuddering with the undeniable, empty cruelty of the cold and fear and roughness of these men and their touch. Within seconds, he became aware, through his tears, that his reprieve had been an accident; Tayne was yelling at the others, and his hands were straying awfully close to his sheathed knife again. "No, put him back down, hold him until he goes limp. Do I have to teach you how to kill somebody?"

"But what if he goes limp because he passed out?"

"Just—just—put him back down, you'll know he's dead when it happens!" Tayne replied, clearly frustrated beyond words.

"No!" Hiccup hated himself for the whimper he'd released. The proud, ruthless fire king had been reduced to a sniveling mass of terror and tears because of water. He couldn't help himself though; the terror



gripping him was undeniable.

Hands like steel found their places upon him once again, but this time he didn't hesitate. Trying to kick and bite, doing whatever he could, he found himself nearly sobbing as he was submerged once again, the water surrounding him on all sides.

He was dying, he knew it. This was the price he had to pay, for hurting so many people—he knew it was fair, knew he deserved it, but he just couldn't stop crying.

The rough hands on his neck were crueler than the others, pushing him so far that he heard the chains protesting even underwater.

\_So this is what it's like, \_Hiccup thought dreamily, only semi-conscious now. \_This is what it's like to die.\_

Choking, helpless terror consumed him, and he closed his eyes as he was swept away by the rough rush of the river, to a world surely no better than this one.

## 18. Chapter 18

\*\*A/N: Well, as I type this, Adrian Von Ziegler's "Eternal Ice" plays in my ears. What a beautiful song. It reminds me a lot of this fic, actually. Also, I'm super hungry so I'm gonna sign off here in a minute and get something to eat, but I just had to update first. I'm actually really surprised I got 57 reviews on this story :) I don't really know anybody who likes it much, so I'm surprised some people did. Please review, it's a sign that people like my work. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>Three Days Earlierâ€| <em>\*\*

Jack almost always had bad dreams. They would wake him sometimes, the sheer terror of those nighttime experiences, and he would often come to screaming or crying inconsolably. And, as he had offered North a place in his ice palace while he struggled to grasp full control over his powers, this presented quite a problem. He knew he couldn't expect North to just be okay with never getting to sleep through the night, so he started training himself not to scream. Though he was actually making considerable progress with both this and his powers, the night did come when he lost it.

Jack sat bolt upright in his ice bed, a terrified scream pouring from his mouth, his clammy, pale hands clenched into tight fists. He knew, in the back of his mind, that he needed to stop screaming, that this was all just a really bad dream, that it hadn't been real, but he couldn't shake the images from his brain, and he couldn't shake the terror gripping him.

Jack dropped his forehead into his hands, listening to North's hurried footsteps, obviously coming to check on his pupil before retiring back into his bedroom. Jack squeezed his eyes shut, surprised to find tears falling from them.

It had been so realâ€|

Jack wasn't even in the dream, which puzzled him; normally, his nightmares involved the people from that island finding him again, imprisoning and beating him all over again, but this time, it hadn't been him who was getting hurt; it had been Hiccup. Jack hadn't been able to see their faces, not clearly, but he saw their hands, large, hairy fingers gripping Hiccup's small body, forcing him down. He saw Hiccup's face break the surface of the rushing water, and watched the boy struggling feebly against them. Jack could not ever remember the people on that island ever trying to kill either of them, so for a moment, he was confused.

The men drew Hiccup out of the water again and with a start, Jack realized his former best friend had started crying, his cheeks bright red, his normally springy red hair limp and damp, clinging to his forehead. The tears pouring from those hollow green eyes scared Jack more than any other nightmare ever could.

The door opened, startling the winter boy out of his thoughts. "I'm sorry," he blurted, knowing it was North. "It was just a bad dream, that's all. Iâ€¦I didn't mean to wake you. Go back to sleep." Yet even as North retreated from the room, Jack repeated his own words to himself. \_"It was just a bad dreamâ€¦"\_ \_

Or was it?

Five sleepless hours later, the sun was finally beginning to slowly rise, and Jack had made his decision: he needed to go back to Hiccup. He wouldn't talk to him, wouldn't even tip the other boy off that he was there. The burns on his arms were just beginning to heal, and he didn't want anymore to add to his collection. But at the same time, he couldn't ignore the nagging feeling that something was very wrong. That dream had really shaken him up. He would just tell North that he needed a short break from training, that he was going to go south for a bitâ€¦ but North would see right through him. When Jack had come back after visiting Hiccup, he'd done something he hadn't done in a very long time, and cried in front of somebody. North knew and understood how badly his pupil had been hurt, and if the man was anything, he was protective. Would he try to stop Jack from going back to Hiccup?

But there was no point in putting it off, so before North could even begin talking about the new abilities Jack was soon going to unlock, the white-haired boy forestalled him. "I'm going," he announced, splashing a little water on his face to hopefully feel better. Being cold always did that to him. The water droplets clung to his pale skin and froze there.

North regarded him seriously. "Where?"

Jack had hoped this question would go on unasked. "South. Not far," he added reassuringly, at North's expression. "And I'll be back by tonight."

North frowned. "South?" he repeated, eyes narrowing.

"Yes." Jack frowned at him. "There's nothing wrong with that, is there? I have the freedom to travel wherever I want."

"Okay." North stood up from the glistening blue table. "It is time we had talk about this." He resumed his seat, but cracked his knuckles a

little, and motioned to the chair across from his.

"North, I'm coming back," Jack said, hoping he could slide out of this. "Really, it's nothing to worry about"

"Sit." Most would think it was domineering of North to give orders in a house that was not his own, but Jack had pretty much accepted to listen to the man the day he'd decided to take him up on the offer of training. He slunk to the chair across from him, swallowing uncomfortably. "Yes?"

"I don't think you should go." There, at least now it was out in the open, stated so boldly.

"Why not?" Jack raised his eyebrows. "It's not like I'm going somewhere on a weeklong trip, it's just a little day jaunt"

"You're going to go to him." It wasn't a question; it was a statement. "You're going to go back to Hiccup, and we both remember what happened last time you did." He eyed the burns on Jack's bare arms pointedly.

Jack felt himself growing defensive. "WellI meanwhat do you care if I am? It doesn't matter, I won't even talk to him! He won't even see me."

"You told me you were giving up on him."

"Iam." The white-haired boy was surprised that his trainer even remembered him saying this. It felt like so long ago.

"Then why are you going back?"

"Becausebecause" Jack felt himself groping wildly for a believable answer. He didn't want to tell North about the dream. The man had already been furious upon finding out that Hiccup had burned his student, and he shuddered to think what would happen if his trainer ever found out that he still harbored a bit of affection for his former best friend.

"Jack, may I speak plainly?" North's voice was calm, controlled; even if the boy said no, North would remain so, and Jack knew it.

"Yes. I guess," Jack answered uncertainly.

"He does not care about you. By what you have told me, Hiccup's done these sorts of things to you before. You yourself admitted you wanted to try and fulfill the prophecy. You admitted what he is doing isn't right, that he hasn't been good to you. Why do you insist on clinging to him when he threw you away a long time ago?"

Jack recoiled as if he'd been slapped, but he knew, in his heart of hearts, that North was speaking the truth. He had seen no regret, no emotion, in Hiccup's eyes. He dropped his blue gaze to the table, unable to hold North's. "PleaseNorthI just need to see him again."

North nodded solemnly. "But Jackif he hurts you again"

"I've given up on him. When I said that, I meant it, but that doesn't mean I want him to die or anything! I justâ€¦I have a really bad feeling that something's happened to him. I need to see. I need to find out for myself."

North frowned, but his eyes were soft and kind. "Jack," he began quietly, "I don't want to be here stitching up your wounds every time you go to see him. I won't do it again. I won't stand for him hurting you again."

"He won't," Jack replied, a pleading note entering his voice. Even he knew he wasn't pleading for North to let him leave â€" he had complete freedom, even with the man's protective nature. He was pleading for his own words to be true. "He won't, I promise you."

"I mean it," North responded in a flat voice as he left the room.

Seeing that the man was now giving him the choice, the winter boy quickly stood from his chair and ran up the stairs to gather what he needed for the journey.

## 19. Chapter 19

\*\*A/N: Well, things are certainly taking a dark turn now, huh? Betrayal. Torture. Possible murder. It's all coming togetherrrr xD funny though, I'd say if this story had a theme, I would not choose redemption xD actually, I don't know what I'd choose...? Not betrayal, though. Hiccup doesn't really betray Jack, and Jack doesn't betray Hiccup. There are just misunderstandings, and goodbyes exchanged between them, and even though some of their words are hateful, I don't think one of them has actively betrayed the other, while knowing all the facts. Like Hiccup didn't mean to burn Jack but Jack didn't know that, so he's like alright witches I'm done with this dude \*Z snap\* Anyway. Sorry. What do you guys think the theme is? \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>Three Days Earlierâ€¦| <em>\*\*

"Jack?"

The winter boy jumped a mile in the air, letting out a little, rather unmanly yelp, the absolute picture of a guilty conscience. To tell the truth, he wasn't very keen on talking to North again until he arrived back, completely unharmed, as he knew he would. He knew his teacher didn't want him to go, but he also knew that he had to â€" he just had to. And then everything would be okay again. Maybe he'd finally be able to forget about Hiccup then.

"Y-yes?" Jack stuttered slightly, leaning against the entrance to the ice palace, his hands grasping uselessly behind his person for the doorknob.

North pretended not to notice this. "Before you go," he said heavily, "I'd like to show you something." His voice was very quiet.

"Erâ€|okay." Jack replied uncertainly. "Butâ€|but you can't convince me not to go," he added sharply, just in case this was what North was trying to do. "I'm going, regardless of what you say or do."

North nodded; he seemed to expect that. "Jack, justâ€|come here. Please, just for a moment. This won't take long."

Jack hesitantly crossed the room to stand where North stood. "Yes?"

"Would you object to learning one last thing before you go?"

Jack's brows drew down. "Wellâ€|I mean, why do you want me to learn this? Can't you wait until I come back?"

"If you insist on seeing your friend againâ€|" North sucked in a breath. "Then no. It can't."

Jack frowned, but decided to wait and see what North would tell him, anyway. There was no use just leaving, like an impatient brat.

"Traditionally," North began, gazing at something beyond Jack, "it is seen as the ultimate act of shame for an elemental, to try and take the life of another. They have been gifted with a power, a power so great that it's nearly incomprehensible. When they use that power to kill another, a regular human at a disadvantage, it pushes them over the edge from highly gifted to monster. And it is seen as something akin to destroying your own species to take the life of another elemental. There are so, so few gifted people out there in the world today. They are being hunted, captured, tortured, murdered. That's why I teach the gifted â€" I teach them so they will use their gifts for good, and so they will only use their powers to kill when they must."

"Okayâ€|" Jack wasn't sure where this was going, but was uncomfortably aware that North had just accused his former best friend of being a monster. And, Jack remembered in a sudden burst of shame, he'd went to the island with Hiccup and just watched him. Why hadn't he stopped him, or tried harder to talk him out of it? Did that make him a monster, too?

"I fear that time is coming for you," North said solemnly, bringing Jack sharply out of his reverie. "And there is only way ice can ever conquer fire."

Jack's eyes widened, and horror shot through him. "North! No! Iâ€|I'll never need to kill Hiccup! He won't hurt me!"

"He tried to kill you, the last time you saw each other." North's voice was gentle, but his words were sharper than a knife. "I'm sorry, Jack, but you must learn this last thing before you go. It will put my mind at ease, knowing you know it."

"I won't need to use it," Jack whispered, mostly to himself. He knew North wouldn't listen anyway.

"The only way ice can conquer fire," North ignored his pupil's words, "is by freezing the flames from the inside out. If you shoot ice at him randomly, as you tend to do in our training sessions, nothing

will get done. You will only waste strength and energy trying to win a fight that you cannot. When all else fails, when he starts going in for the kill, and when you are absolutely sure that you have no other choiceâ€|you aim for his heart."

"Whatâ€|whatâ€|" Jack's mouth was suddenly very dry. "Thatâ€|that will kill him?"

"Instantly." North whispered. His voice was sad, but his features were hard and set. He really thought Jack was going to need this. "Please, Jack â€" when the time comes, tell me you won't hesitate to use it."

\* \* \*

><p>It was so quiet.<p>

The desolation could have easily been explanation for that, but somehow, Jack expected more. Really, he didn't know what Hiccup did in his spare time, when he wasn't killing people or destroying ecosystems. Maybe he left some of them alive, to do as he pleased withâ€|no. Jack shuddered. The idea was too horrible to think about.

Maybe Hiccup was just sleeping? Jack longed for it to be so, trying to convince himself that, whatever his friend's affairs, they were perfectly innocent. But, remembering North's words, he also knew he needed to keep his guard up at every moment. There was no telling whether he could even hide from Hiccup in the boy's own realm, but he was determined to do so for as long as he could.

But there was no possible way that Hiccup could be sleeping â€" Jack knew the boy took great precautions before allowing his eyes to close for any length of time, and, with those gleaming orange doors thrown wide open, it didn't seem very safe. Hesitantly, Jack walked inside, glancing around at the wrecked furniture, most of it carelessly pushed aside to create a great, empty space in the middle of the main floor. Two staircases, leading to the next floor, seemed to almost welcome him, tempting him with the promise of secrets. He drew a deep breath. The longer he stayed here, the more likely it was that Hiccup would find him. Yet he knew Hiccup was not here. Perhaps the boy was simply out, maybe he'd be back soonâ€|

That could have been likely, yet why would he have left the doors to his palace open? He may have been so arrogant as to think that no one would dare attack him, but Jack knew Hiccup. Arrogance and foolishness were very different things.

The winter boy braved the next floor, and the next, always half-expecting to find Hiccup, skulking in shadows, hugging walls and sticking to corners. And always, he found only empty rooms wherever he looked. There was a very large room on one of the uppermost floors, a bed of solid lava in the corner. There were no blankets, and Jack found this odd. Hiccup wasn't like him; despite having superhuman powers, he still felt the cold. Surely he could have found blankets in one of the villages he destroyed? Jack's pale hands clenched into fists as he slowly lowered himself onto the bed. For an instant, he tried to imagine what Hiccup could possibly be doing that involved broken furniture and beds with no warmth, but his dream crept back to the forefront of his mind.

He drew a deep yet shaky breath, standing up suddenly. No. This wasn't right. A thin film of dust coated the floor, and with the furniture all beaten up like it wasâ€|

Something had happened, and Jack simply couldn't hide from it anymore. The winter boy closed his eyes, feeling his knees giving way beneath him. His body found the bed and for a second, he lay there, puzzling out his dream and the strange sense, that sixth sense that told him something was not right.

He slowly rose, as if waking from a long sleep, walking down several staircases, past several floors without even realizing where he was going. When at last he stood outside again, he looked at the desolation, the imposing orange building, dominating the skyline. Something really had happened to Hiccup, and for just a moment, unbidden and selfish thoughts entered his mind. Even if his dream was real, and Hiccup wasâ€|they were really hurting him in that way, did he even deserve to be rescued?

Jack felt immediately guilty for even thinking such thoughts, yet it was true. For the last few months, all Hiccup had done was hurt people. North himself had said that it was the lowest act of cruelty, for an elemental to use their powers on those weaker than they. What had he said? It seemed like such a long time ago.

"\_When they use that power to kill another, a regular human at a disadvantage, it pushes them over the edge from highly gifted to a monster." \_

Jack swallowed. His friend was both â€" highly gifted and a monster. Was there redemption, even for monsters?

## 20. Chapter 20

\*\*A/N: Well, I had an epiphany about the theme of this story, but I guess I'll just let it go unspoken, since it doesn't really matter anyway. For those of you who don't know, cacao is a muscle-relaxing herb often associated with calmness, and I chose it because I think that the herb would affect elementals like Hiccup and Jack, relax their muscles so extremely that it'd even relax their abilities, interfering with their powers and making it almost impossible to use them. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>Two Days Earlierâ€| <em>\*\*

Jack lived so far up north that the ice palace seemed to be constantly teetering on the edge of civilization. Even without the winter boy's powers, there was an almost constant background roar of snow and strong winds. Leaving the palace was hard, even for him, and North knew this. Leaving the palace, trudging through knee-deep snow, and going very far south would take at least eight hours or so.

Jack had left hours ago, and he still wasn't back yet. North was ready to pull his hair out in worry. Something must have happened. Jack misjudged his friendâ€|again. He'd trusted him despite the signs pointing not to, he'd trusted him despite all of North's

not-so-subtle warnings. He'd trusted him, and North felt sure that his pupil had paid the price. What must be happening to him now? It had been almost five hours since he'd left. North had not gone a second without worrying, and now that the sun was beginning to set, he knew that he would not get a wink of sleep, either. He knew he needed to set out for Jack, but if the boy turned out to be perfectly fineâ€|

No. North shut down those thoughts. Whatever had happened, Jack was not alright. He didn't care if his pupil accused him of overreacting, or even that he knew he was. Jack was his student, and that meant that he was officially under North's protection. He had to go after him.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack did not even know where to look. He stumbled blindly around in the choking smoke for a bit, going in desperate circles, looking for signs of devastation that might point him in Hiccup's direction. The only problem was, the devastation was all around him. He considered giving up, letting fate have its way with his former best friend, but almost immediately he was ashamed for thinking it. Hiccup might have done awful things, maybe even unforgivable. But Jack couldn't justify himself, if he stood back and let his friend die. It would make him a monster by association, just as he had been when he hadn't stood up for those helpless people, all those people that his friend had murdered.<p>

He stopped to think, the orange gleaming palace still only a few feet away behind him. Running around randomly was getting him nowhere, so he looked around, at the gray, cloudy sky, threatening rain. He hoped some fell. He struggled to think clearly, finding himself suddenly upon the ground, and not knowing how he got there. If I had a fire boy, he thought to himself, his brain moving slowly, where would I take him, if I didn't want to kill him?

For Jack refused to believe that Hiccup had been killed. If he had been, the winter boy would have heard the news. Everyone was trying to hunt his friend down, and everyone would be eager to prove that they could. Even when somebody so much as saw him and lived to tell the tale, it was big news. One little girl â€" a cute blonde thing, Abigail, Jack thought she might have been called â€" claimed to have met and spoken to Hiccup.

"He wasn't very nice," he recalled hearing her say when he visited her village in a desperate attempt to find a lead on his friend. "But he wasn't as mean as everyone says, either."

Everyone had believed that it was a miracle that saved the little girl's life â€" some even said that she must have a guardian angel that had guided her home safely, away from him.

Jack shook himself out of his thoughts. There was no possible way that Hiccup was dead, because it would have been breaking news. Everyone would feel safer once he was killed. The winter boy drew a deep breath. Where would they take Hiccup? They couldn't possibly have taken him much farther south â€" it was his domain, after all, and there was little left alive the farther south you went now. Jack swallowed as a new thought occurred to him.



Hiccup could be perfectly fine. He probably wasn't captured. After all, he had the power of a whole element on his side. How could he possibly have been hurt, with the knowledge that he could easily hurt them? He'd probably killed them, and then just decided to abandon this place, deem it unsafe, and move on.

Jack looked around the desolate landscape once more, seeking solace and comfort that was not there. How could he possibly know what to do? He rose to his feet as a new idea occurred to him, beginning to pace back and forth in front of the palace. Yes, this made perfect sense. North had spoken about it to him briefly in their lessons, telling him to never accept food from anyone, for it could containâ€|

"Cacao," he finished his thought, speaking aloud. "If I had a fire king drugged with cacao, where would I be keeping him?"

End  
file.